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THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST

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THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT.

We've only just begun

Feminism in the 1990s

A VEGETARIAN'S DILEMMA ...

Was there a night in Mexico when you couldn't face the frijoles again and had chicken? Or a time in a Zambian village when you ate the mutton stew rather than seem rude by refusing meat?

WHILE some countries offer plenty of non-meat dishes, finding vegetarian meals in other parts of the world can be the ultimate challenge – just the kind of thing NI vegetarians would know all about. So we would like to hear from you with recipes from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East for our new **NI Vegetarian Food Book**.

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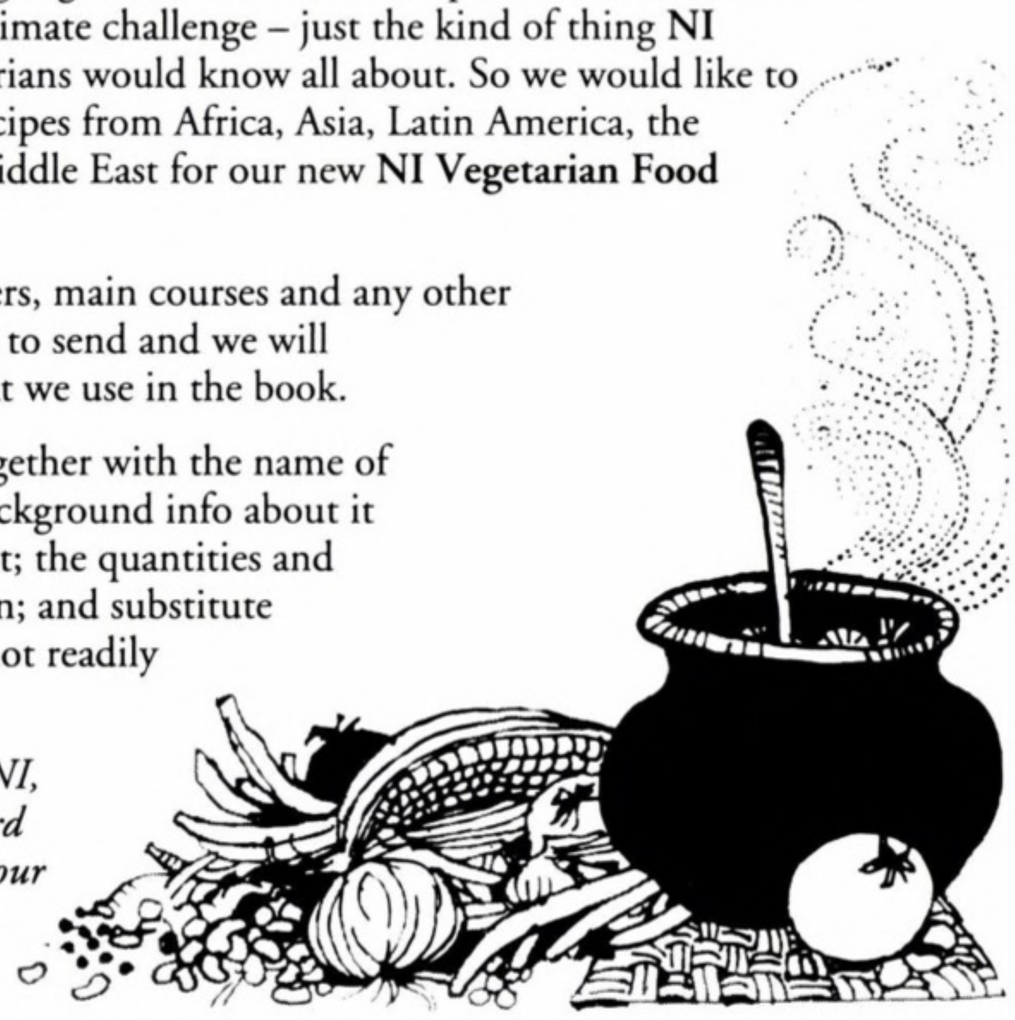
Please send them together with the name of the dish and a little background info about it and/or where you ate it; the quantities and method for preparation; and substitute ingredients for items not readily available here.

Mail to: *Troth Wells, NI, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK or to your national office listed on this page.*



coming next MONTH

Changing charity
50 years of Oxfam

Voluntary aid to the Third World changes all the time. In the 1960s people discovered the world was full of poor people. In the 1970s aid agencies realized that you had to attack the causes of poverty, not just the symptoms. And in the 1980s and 1990s? This year Oxfam, Britain's biggest development charity, celebrates its 50th anniversary – and the **NI** takes the pulse of voluntary aid in general by taking a close look at Oxfam in particular. Is it effective? Is it too political – or not political enough?

Key questions raised include:

- **Are charities turning** into the privatized welfare arm of national governments, drawing more and more of their funds from official sources and being co-opted by a Western foreign-policy agenda?
- **Does 'alternative trading'** really do any good? How much do you learn from having a Makonde carved table lamp in your living room? And should alternative traders insist that poor people work in co-operatives when most people in the West have never encountered one?
- **Should development charities** start raising funds from the middle classes in Third World countries for their own poor?
- **Is bigger necessarily better?** Should charities raise as much money as they can or do they become more inefficient beyond a certain size?
- **How do the people** Oxfam tries to help see its work? Do they view it as a partner or just as a milk cow?

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New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

The **NI** magazine is edited, produced and sold by **New Internationalist Publications Ltd** which is co-operatively run by:- *Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Wayne Ellwood, Alan Hughes, Guy Montgomery, Gill Moore, Clive Offley, David Ransom, James Rowland, Sue Shaw, Debbie Simms, Kate Stott, Richard Swift, Dexter Tiranti, Jim Turner, Troth Wells.* Editorial responsibility rests with the co-operative, whose purpose is to communicate development ideals through print and film to the widest possible audience.

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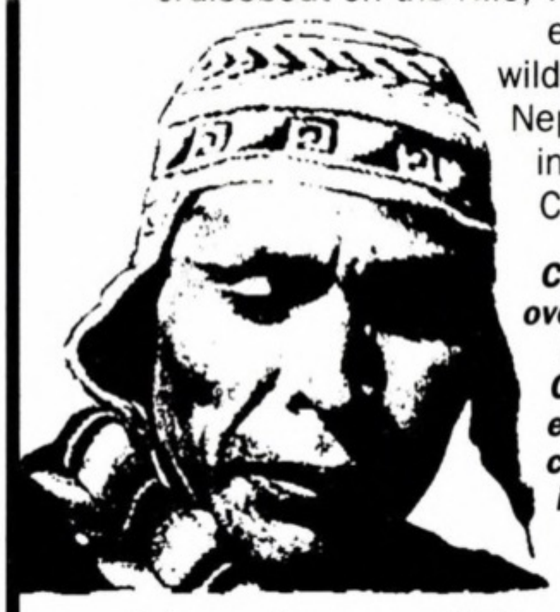

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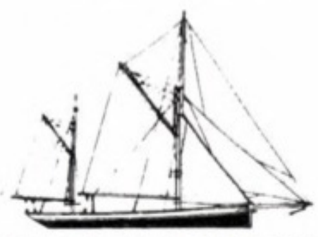

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CONTENTS

We've only just begun 4
Coiled spring or damp squib? ***Vanessa Baird*** *looks at feminism in the 1990s.*

Purple politics and the white woman's dress 8
Poet ***Amryl Johnson*** *is feminist, black and has a dream.*

Agony! 11
Great and Important Men write to ***Agony Aunt Emmeline*** *for advice. She gives it…*

Silicon tricks and the two dollar woman 12
Cynthia Enloe *unpacks the post-modern world of women's work.*

The Real Woman 15
What does it take to be a woman? ***Nina Silver*** *tries to find out – in a dazzling variety of ways.*

WOMEN TODAY – THE FACTS 18

Now, listen to me! 20
Wanjiru Kihoro *takes a critical look at the lip-service paid to women by Western development agencies.*

Breaking points 22
Will Islamic fundamentalists break Zahra – as they have broken so many Afghan women? She shares her experience with ***Sarah Miles****.*

Simply – a history of feminism 24

Don't wanna be like you 26
A sticky moment for feminist ***Juliet Kellner*** *when her feminist daughter accuses her of being a 'doormat'…*

New Age Patriarchs 29
A new breed of 'new men' has appeared on the scene. Are they good news for women? ***Erica Simmons*** *investigates*

Letters 2
Letter from India 3
Update 31
Reviews: plus **Sillitoe/Reisz** classic 34
Curiosities 36
Endpiece: by **Kit Garbett** 37
Country profile: Argentina 38

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH: CONSTRUCTION WORKER IN HONDURAS BY **JENNY MATTHEWS/FORMAT**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Feminism

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

'You're going to make a lot of people very angry,' said my friend encouragingly, as I discussed one of the items planned for this issue of **NI**. I won't spoil the fun by telling you which. It could actually be any one of a number. Feminism is like that. Few of the articles we carry in New Internationalist raise such hell as those that could be loosely termed 'feminist'. What might seem like a harmless observation to the writer – verging on the platitudinous even – can inspire an awesome torrent from an incensed reader.

It seems strange that ideas that have been knocking around for some time continue to arouse such strong feelings. And researching the history of feminism for the *Simply* spread made me realize just how long those ideas *have* been around. Far from being a steady progress from dark ignorance to enlightenment the story of feminism is one of fits and starts, of protest and progress followed by backlash and repression.

Sexual equality is a dynamite issue. It touches all of us. A lot of energy is invested in trying to make it happen. A lot of energy is invested in trying to stop it happening. This makes it emotionally charged, so virtually anything you say can upset or anger or offend somebody. They might be annoyed by what you include – or even more by what you don't include. There is no point in pretending that this has not cost me sleepless nights.

But there have been aspects of putting together this magazine that have been especially inspiring. At the outset we decided that there should be several interviews with people from different parts of the world in whose lives feminism or feminist ideas had played a crucial part. Their contributions were vital and heart-warming. They reminded me that feminism is not an abstraction but something that lives and breathes in the hearts and minds of many people – both female and male.

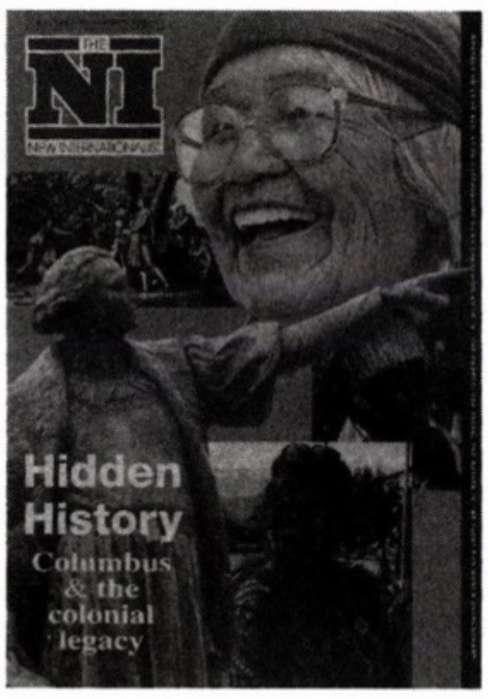
There will be people who question whether feminism should be a subject at all. Surely it should inform every issue of the magazine? I would agree. But the sharp, single-focus issue sometimes helps too. The last time we did this was in 1985, to mark the end of the UN Decade For Women. The one before that was in 1980. That issue was both edited and designed by men. This time both are women, this being the first issue designed by Kate. Indeed, it is the first **NI** ever to have been designed by a woman. Something is happening…

Vanessa Baird

Vanessa Baird
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Hero worship

Your pseudo-psychological profile of Columbus *(Hidden History* **NI 226)** amounts to near blasphemy. What right have you to distort history in this fashion and then apply that same jaundiced view of explorers to our modern-day heroes,



the astronauts? Don't you understand that the desire to tread where no person has trod before is one of the finest qualities that human-kind possesses? We should look up to such people, not subject them to mockery and scorn.

Amelia Hunter
Malvern, UK

Green concern

Environmentalists who demand that land be transformed into national parks are merely extending their consumerism to the environment they wish to save. By packaging the wilderness into such parks, it becomes not merely a conservatory for wildlife, but playgrounds for those who can afford to visit. Ramachandra Guha (*Endpiece* **NI 225**) is right to wish for a more integrated programme between the State and local communities so that both wilderness and traditional ways of life are not merely conserved as in a museum, but remain in a dynamic form.

Eva Fleg Lambert
Cannach, Scotland, UK

Freedom to exploit

What is this freedom that the International Freedom Foundation stands for? Licence for the power to exploit the weak? I can think of no other explanation for the outbursts of Marc Gordon and his ilk (*Letters* **NI 225**) against Oxfam and Christian Aid, whose field workers are constantly hampered by corrupt and unjust governments and imperialism. The most valuable work accomplished by these agencies is in the field of development, where the co-operation of governments is crucial. One outstanding example of their assistance was to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua — but maybe Mr. Gordon was all for the Contra terrorists?

Barbara Maule-Johnstone,
Exeter, UK

VIV QUILLIN

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Burning issue

In the context of your magazine on addictive drugs (*The crazy war on drugs* **NI 224**) I would like to point out that cigarette smoking causes six times as many premature deaths in the UK as all accidents, manslaughter, murders, fires and AIDS cases put together. It is the most addictive of available drugs. Ninety per cent of teenagers who smoke three or four cigarettes a day become regular smokers. It is promoted by an annual advertizing budget in the UK of £125 million effectively aimed at children – virtually no-one starts smoking as an adult. The tobacco epidemic is the most important reversible cause of ill health in our country, with the unfortunate potential to occupy the same position world wide in the future.

Duncan Macintyre,
Consultant Physician
Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Narrow focus

I was disappointed that *The Dispossessed* **(NI 223)** gave no insight into the 100 thousand Tibetans who fled to India where they remain, after the Chinese invaded their homeland in 1950. Nor was any allusion made to the plight of some 300,000 Muslims from Xinjiang, East Turkistan; to the existence of about 100,000 of these Muslims in Turkey; or to the tens of thousands of Chittagong Tracts tribespeople who fled furious persecution by the Bangladeshi Government.

I noticed a small but important note alluding to the fact that Palestinians and the displaced people from the West Bank area do not have refugee status. That reference should have been extended to encompass the existence of some 600,000 people, many of whom are referred to above.

Paul Ingram
Secretary, Optimus,
London, UK

Refugee punishment

I want to tell you about the plight of El-Hocine Nait-Blaid, a Berber from Algeria, who is in Durham prison in the UK, awaiting a decision about his application for political asylum. It is now seven months since his arrest, and he is beginning to feel all the frustrations of being incarcerated in a place for criminals. His only crime is a desire for a life of peace.

His fiance and myself have started to campaign for his release by holding vigils outside the prison, and are endeavouring to form a support group. Anyone wishing to help can contact me at my address which is, 8 Beckston Close, Naisberry Park, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS26 0PA.

Looking ahead we would like to form a trust to help other asylum seekers who are also being held in custody. This situation is a national shame when you consider the noise that the government makes about human rights in other countries.

Revd. Michael J Cook,
Hartlepool, UK

Forgotten people

Notably absent from your special issue on refugees were the 120,000 Mozambicans in South Africa (*The Dispossessed* **NI 223**). The South African Government has never recognized these people as refugees.

They were granted refuge by the homeland authorities of Gazankulu and Ka Ngwane, but the South African Government treats them as illegal immigrants. And if caught, they are deported back to Mozambique. An electric fence, built to keep them out has reportedly killed 400 people in recent years.

Without official protection the Mozambicans are vulnerable to abuse and economic exploitation as cheap labour on farms. They have even been traded as slaves. The South African Government recently agreed that UNHCR could monitor the return of 40,000 South African exiles. But the Mozambican refugees in South Africa remain as vulnerable as ever.

Becky Jones
London, UK

Evidence needed

How very pompously 'British' of Jonathan Dimbleby of the BBC to politely demonstrate to the Sudanese President, Major-General Omar al-Bashir, the proper way to go about things (*Disasters* **NI 222**). We may have regular Amnesty reports of human rights abuses in the Sudan. But we don't *really* have the facts,

Jonathan. And I cannot honestly condemn the President without more information.

Diana Ricard
Casuanina, Australia

Sex war

The article by Anuradha Vittachi (*Our boys, our toys* **NI 221**) smacks of feminine rhetoric while pretending to talk about the cost of the Middle East war. She talks about the righteous male while playing the righteous female, and to my mind is no better than the people she is criticizing.

The question 'why do men not welcome the inclusion of their feminine side?' is asked towards the end of the article which leads to more rhetoric. Men do not have a feminine side, but need to deal with their emotional well-being as whole people. This kind of material slows down change.

DR Henry
Penticton, BC, Canada

Democratic abuse

We welcome the focus on human rights and democracy at the Commonwealth Conference at Harare. But democracy alone cannot guarantee basic human rights and civil liberties.

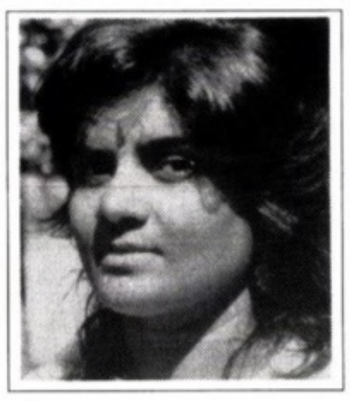
Today, India continues to violate every international covenant it has signed on human rights. The draconian laws which legitimize the use of undue force pale beside those of official dictatorships. Amnesty International has documented massive human rights violations and oppression on the part of Indian security forces in various parts of the country. This has arisen because the peoples in Punjab, Kashmir, and the North East states are demanding their democratic right of self-determination.

The Commonwealth should establish a commission to consider the human rights records of its members, and expose the violators. Countries should only be given foreign aid if they show willingness to improve their human rights records.

Iqbal Singh
Angela Dietrich,
Sikh Human Rights Internet,
Reading, UK

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

L E T T E R F R O M **I N D I A**



Flying visit to Washington

Mari Marcel Thekaekara *knows about advocacy in India. But she discovers that in the US it is a whole different ball game.*

OUT of the blue, I received an invitation to apply for an advocacy fellowship in Washington DC. The ex-Oxfam person who sent me the invitation was mysterious about how he got my address, but said he'd been an **NI** admirer for many years.

Washington in the Fall is beautiful. Four weeks have flown by in a blitz of impressions, experiences, and excitement.

David Cohen, founder of the Advocacy Institute is a veteran of the Civil Rights movement. He arrived in Washington during the Kennedy years and started to fight and win mammoth battles against cigarette advertizing, the building of anti-ballistic missiles, against efforts to weaken minimum wage laws and for housing for the poor. David is a legend in advocacy circles. But what amazes me most is that he has kept fighting for nearly two decades and continues to keep his vision. There are many others like him who have succeeded in inspiring young people to continue the fight for justice, equality, and a decent life for others.

To those of us from India the advocacy system here is a whole new ball game. Many people have asked us why we came to the US to learn about advocacy. Someone replied, 'because they've turned it into a fine art'. And watching the campaigns and the lobbyists is, as they say,'something else'.

Everyone took a couple of days to recover from culture shock. There was a bewildering barrage of technology to adjust to – computers in every room, faxes, telephones with a battery of buttons and electronic mail.

One of the hardest things has been getting to grips with the term 'American Poverty'. You cannot compare poverty in India with poverty here. Yet the sense of desolation, of bleak hopelessness in inner city areas seems greater than anything I have experienced in India.

Each of us has been given a placement at a host agency and every agency has a formidable reputation. Through the agency *La Raza,* Martin has found parallels between the scheduled caste people he works with in Gujarat and the Hispanic people here. Santa, who works with children in Bihar jails, is learning about child abuse and other problems at her placement in the Children's Defence Fund. And Medha has joined the Communications Consortium which she hopes will teach her new skills for her work with All India Radio Bombay.

I am based at the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities where people analyse government statistics and actively campaign against anti-poor policies. In the past they have worked on housing, welfare, food stamps, taxes on low income families and currently on defence and domestic budgets. The Centre was started by Robert Greenstein, described in the *Washington Post* as 'a thin, bearded federal budget wizard' and 'a one-man liberal army on Capitol Hill'. The *Post* says that Greenstein is a living demonstration of the maxim that 'knowledge is power'. And the same can be said for the Centre.

I am amazed at the way people here process a

ADN/ZB

bewildering array of facts into one-page executive summaries which are concise, readable, succinct, and, most of all, credible.

Politicians, bureaucrats and policy-makers often call the Centre for facts and information, and interns here read everything they produce many times to check the veracity of the document before it goes out.

The atmosphere is exciting, and often tense as people wait anxiously for the verdict on whichever battle they're fighting. But there's fun and laughter too, as there always is in a place where there are a bunch of basically decent people working with commitment for a cause.

Ellen Nissenbaum is the Centre's chief lobbyist and personifies the spirit of the place. She has an incredible memory, is intelligent, incisive and tough. I have watched her in many situations: dealing with Congresspeople; briefing a coalition of several hundred people preparing to fight for defence money to be reallocated to the domestic sector; reporting to the press estimating ego clashes and dealing diplomatically with them. Mostly she emerges a winner.

Was it necessary to come to the US to learn about advocacy? I would say no. But I recommend the experience. There is a professionalism here which we could use back home. And a great deal of strategy and useful experience that is applicable to India. Systems are different. But human beings are essentially the same. ■

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for the last seven years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

We've only just begun

JOANNE O'BRIEN/FORMAT

Is feminism dead? Many would have us believe so.
***Vanessa Baird** checks its pulse –*
and looks ahead.

THERE was an mood of heady optimism in the buildings of the United Nations in New York and Geneva today, following the sacking of 94 per cent of staff holding top positions in the organization.

In Zaire sixty per cent of secondary schoolboys were kept home until further notice. The same happened in Mali, Pakistan and several other African and Asian countries.

In Canada male lawyers, university teachers and other professionals were scratching their heads, wondering what to do about their sudden 20 per cent pay decrease.

Crumpled grey suits and the sounds of the menagerie were oddly absent in London's Houses of Parliament after 88 per cent of MPs lost their seats. The same happened in São Paulo, Penang, Tunis, Canberra and Washington.

In Bangladesh, boys tucked into breakfasts substantially smaller than yesterday's. And their fathers prepared the meal, served other family members first, washed the children, cleaned the house, went out to work and got no free time at all.[1]

This is how 1992 might have started had it been decided that at the stroke of midnight a worldwide programme of sexual equality would be put into practice – and that the best way to start would be to put males on the same footing as females: same work, same pay, same power, same privilege, same access to services.

Now, I'm not proposing this as **the** feminist agenda. Feminism is about radical change – not just a rearrangement of the status quo.

Nor does this snapshot of a 'level playing field' take everything in. There is the matter of several millennia of patriarchy, which have made normal all manner of violence, abuse and exploitation.

But this scenario throws into perspective the claims some people now make that the main battles have been won, that we are now living in a 'post-feminist' age in which women enjoy full rights.

SUE DARLOW/FORMAT

Women in India are striking back, writes Mari Marcel Thekaekera. In West Bengal a young woman caused a storm when she publicized her future in-laws' demand for an extra dowry. Undaunted by the fact that around 1,700 Indian women get murdered a year by their irate, dowry-greedy in-laws she told her story to a popular newspaper, revealing all and warning other women about the family. Overnight she became a heroine, giving courage to women, while prompting a flood of marriage proposals from men inspired by her spirit. Meanwhile, in Tamil Nadu, women who were being beaten and raped by their drunken husbands started a campaign to close liquor shops. It became a hot issue in the state elections for the post of Chief Minister. The woman candidate, Jayalalitha, won with an overwhelming majority – thanks to women's votes – and liquor shops in the state were shut down within days of her coming to power.

Drops of freedom

It isn't difficult to see why these claims are made. Feminism has made some spectacular advances in the past 20 years. Anti-discrimination laws have opened a whole new range of jobs to women (especially the middle-class and educated) and given them far greater economic independence. The number of girls going to school has shot up, worldwide. Women almost everywhere have more control over the number of children they have thanks to contraception. Sex has got better as women exert more choice and ask themselves what it is they really want. Pornography and sexism in language have been challenged, with varying degrees of success.

But these are drops in the ocean. The world is still ruled by men – and that's bad news for women. Men make wars. Women make up most of the refugees displaced by war. Men shape financial strategy. Women make up most of the world's poor. Men run the wheels of polluting big business – women search for firewood and water in degraded environments. Men structure the world of work – women carry the double burden of work inside and outside the house.

But hang on. Most countries now have anti-discrimination laws. In 1979 the United Nations General Assembly voted to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. So what is holding back women? If they are not getting ahead is it maybe because they don't want to?

Perhaps. Centuries of being viewed as inferior to men has left women, collectively, with a pretty low self-image. After all oppression does not exist to encourage or propel its victims forward.

Laws may be fine in theory, but society and culture continue to discriminate against women – as Laeticia Mukurasi discovered. Her country, Tanzania, has exemplary sexual equality laws but she was the only woman manager in the state company for which she worked. She was good at her job, better qualified than her male colleagues.

The first serious blow came when she and her husband split up. Her male bosses ordered her to leave the company house that went with her job – but allowed her husband to remain. Then, with an IMF austerity plan used as the excuse, she was made redundant.

She appealed. 'I may have lacked alliances, a godfather and an informal network, but I had the law there to protect me,' she said. The battle lasted four years. She and her children would have become completely destitute had it not been for friends who donated food. All her friends advised her to give up. 'A woman can't win,' they said. But she persisted and was finally reinstated.

'When a woman decides to break the chains of her oppression,' she observed, 'she discovers she is fighting against a significant portion of the patriarchal superstructure in which men gang up together and use their positions against her as a single woman in order to destroy her. In other words it becomes a political struggle and she does not have the advantage of an informal network that is at men's disposal.'[2]

Backlash blues

We are only at the beginning of the road to equality – and getting laws in place is just a first step. Yet a backlash is already in full swing. The strategies vary, but the message to women is the same: 'That's enough. You have gone too far. We need to go back to something solid, safe, traditional. With us men calling the shots.'

Religious fundamentalists – both Islamic and Christian – are well known for their anti-women's rights stance. Both try to use the law to restrict women's freedom.

JENNY MATTHEWS/FORMAT

Clear message: messy reality. Women still work more hours a week than men – 13 more in Africa, 6 in Europe.

Islamic reactionaries seek to restrict a women's freedom of movement and right to education. Christian reactionaries attack reproductive rights.

But there is another more subtle form of backlash. It goes something like this. 'Feminism has failed women badly. Instead of liberating them it has actually created a new set of problems. Professional women in the West are particularly ill and unhappy,' write the experts in scientific journals, popular books and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. Liberated women's ailments include 'burnout', 'stomach cramps', 'infertility' and 'eye-twitching disorders'. Diagnosis of cause: 'too much equality. What the women *really* want to is to be conscientious housewives and proud mothers'.

Writer Susan Faludi has detected in this 'a kind of pop culture version of the big lie, it stands the truth boldly on its head and proclaims that the very steps that have elevated women's position have actually led to their downfall'.[3]

In fact, surveys show that 75-95 per cent of women in the US think feminism has improved their lives.[3] The things that bother them most are female poverty and the rise in violence against women. Hardly the products of too much equality: rather the universal outcome of universal inequality.

But if we are still so far from equality why is the backlash happening now? 'Backlashes occur when advances have been small, before changes are sufficient to help many people,' says psychiatrist Dr Jean Baker Miller. 'It is almost as if the leaders of the backlash use the fear of change as a threat before major change has occurred.'[3]

The F — word

Now, one way of making sure that the majority of women are kept down is to elevate a few, carefully selected individuals, and allow them to enter the magic circle of power and privilege. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher – admiringly called 'the best man for the job' by Ronald Reagan – was a celebrated example. Once in place she consolidated her power and ruled by supporting not challenging the male institution that kept other women out.

Recently I read, on the financial pages of a daily newspaper, what seemed like a classic feminist success story. Two women executives were running their own, highly successful, all-women consultancy business. But midway through the interview one declared that she and her business partner were not feminists. 'We are ordinary people who are very sociable and good at mixing,' she said. I could only guess at what her image of a feminist was...

This story reminded me of an incident in Peru a few years ago. I was with a couple of women from Manuella Ramos, a feminist organization based in Lima doing outreach work in the shanty towns. They worked with groups that had not come into contact with feminism and we were making a second visit to the 'mothers' club' in Fundo Marquez. One of the women, Laura, was explaining to me how she avoided using the word 'feminist' until she really got to know the group. It might put them off, seem too threatening or too middle-class.

During the meeting the shanty-town women's conversation ranged from housing problems, domestic violence, childbirth, divorce, and organizing the soup kitchen. At the end of the meeting one of the women turned to Laura and said:

'There's something that has been puzzling us. We were wondering... Are you... um... feminists?'

Laura shifted uncomfortably. 'Er... yes, as a matter of fact, we are'.

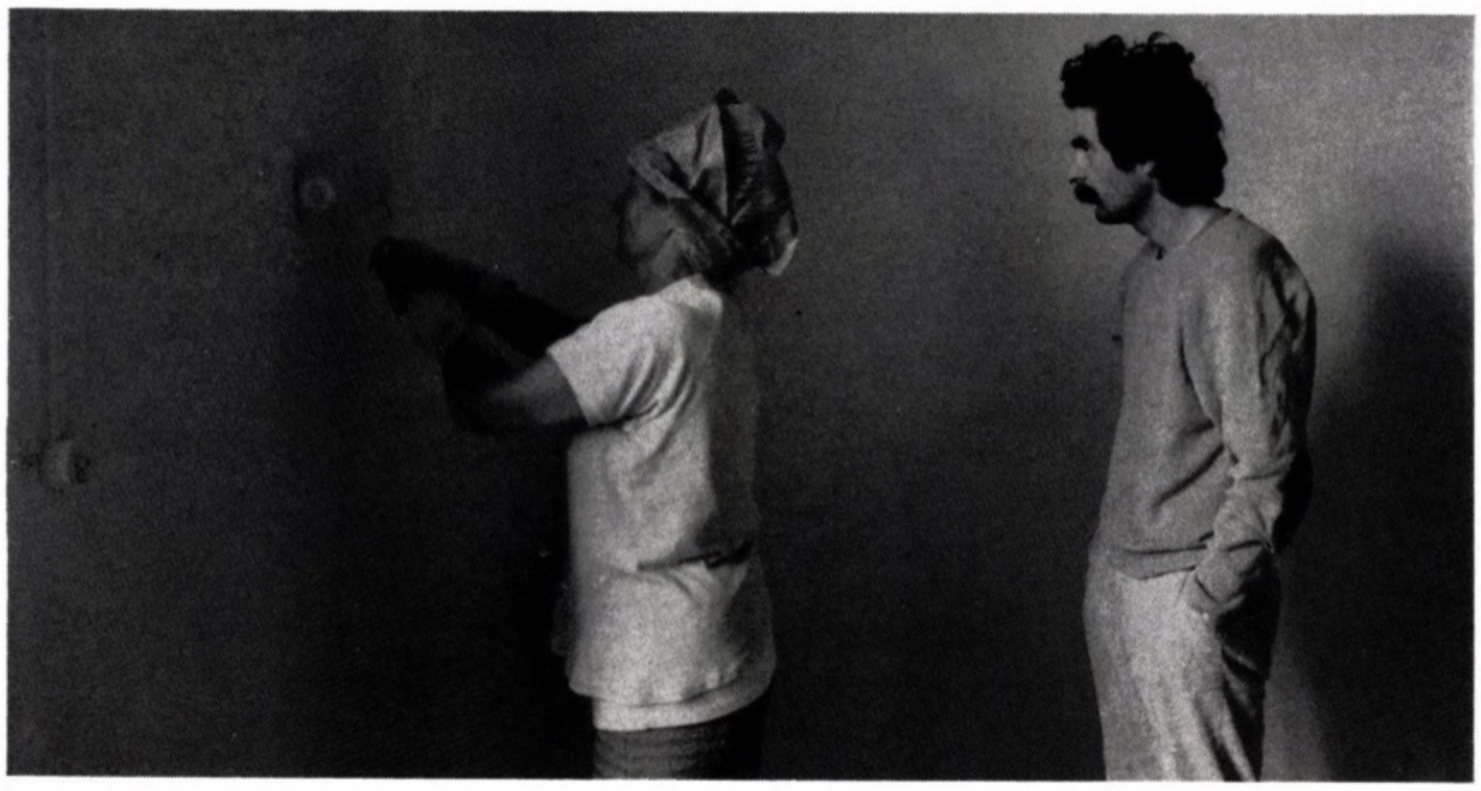
'Then why didn't you say so! We are all feminists here!'

So what is feminism? I think it is about trying to live your life as you would wish rather than as men or male society would wish. It's about believing that women are human beings, different to men but with equal rights. It's about supporting other women – and that's crucial. More theoretically, in the words of writer Marilyn French, feminism is 'the only serious coherent and universal philosophy that offers an alternative to patriarchal thinking and structures'.[4]

Feminists first suggested that the personal was political; that what happened in the bedroom had everything to do with what happened in the boardroom – and that the same sex was in control in both places. But they also argued that the revolution against patriarchy was one that challenged the very idea of power; that pleasure was a superior principle around which to organize society.

This is what makes it radical. It means that women who get into positions of power or influence in their workplace or union or group or political party cannot stop there. They must start working from within to feminize the institution. That means getting rid of the male nonsense about power and competition with all its hierarchies and creating a system that is more productive, positive, supportive, co-operative.

Creating a radically new politics that does not mirror the methods and strategies of the oppressor is no easy task. Since the 1960s women all over the world have been



GUY LE QUERREC/MAGNUM

developing new ways to achieve it, ways that are female rather than male. From Rio to Reykjavik difficult subjects like rape and incest have been brought out into the open. Refuges for battered women and survivor groups have been set up. Racism has begun to be confronted, taken on board, discussed. Lesbianism has come out of the closet – especially in the West – and become an option rather than a taboo and even a political statement of independence. Some women have become separatists, creating their own communities. Consciousness-raising groups have helped many thousands of women to identify their oppression – to find ways of challenging it and take control of their lives.

But all is not wonderful. There have been splits and divisions within the women's movements of many countries. Most famous – and long-lasting – was that between Socialist-Feminists and Radical-Feminists. Socialist-Feminists emphasized women's economic oppression. Capitalism was primarily to blame for oppression of women. Only a social revolution could liberate them. The Radicals, on the other hand, emphasized family and personal oppression. Men oppressed women because by doing so they defined themselves as men, and superior. For any real change to happen there would have to be a revolution in personal politics first.

The Radical Feminists accused the Socialist Feminists of letting men off the hook. The fact that they were so closely aligned to their male comrades meant that they were not really feminists at all. The Socialists Feminists saw the Radicals as lacking in class analysis. Their purist, 'more-feminist-than-thou' stance was typically middle-class, they claimed.

There was no resolution to this conflict – just stalemate at a time when women's rights were under fire from both the New Right and religious fundamentalists.

PAM ISHERWOOD/FORMAT

Critical point for women: to move on or to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous backlash.

What next?

So where is feminism in the 1990s? One important change is that there is a greater willingness to accept that there is no One True Feminist Faith but many different feminisms. Yours may not be mine, mine may not be yours. But each counts, each is important, each is doing something.

Has feminism lost its momentum, though? Not in Saudi Arabia where women recently broke fundamentalist law, got behind the wheels of cars and drove through Riyadh, incurring the fury of police and gangs of stone-throwing men.

Feminism is very much alive in the streets of Bombay, London, Tel Aviv, São Paulo, Larnaca, Seoul and Washington as I write, with women taking part in an international protest against domestic violence and demanding it be an issue at the 1993 world congress on human rights.

It's alive in Eastern Europe as feminists face up to some of the 'benefits' to women of Western freedom – an upsurge in pimping, pornography and sex tourism. It is also quietly alive in Soweto as a woman leaves her husband to prepare his own supper while she goes to an ANC meeting.

There is a growing sense of urgency, among many feminists; of the need for action rather than reaction. So poet June Jordan exhorts us:'Let us not sit inside our sorrows, let's not describe things to death. My orientation is activism. Other than that it is like a kind of vanity or a decadence...'[5] Veteran Civil Rights campaigner Angela Davis stresses the need for feminist projects as opposed to feminist definitions. The big challenge for the future, she says, is 'making the transition from consciousness to action, from theory to practice... While the theoretical work is very important the work of the activist will determine whether or not we move onto a new stage. Everyone should learn to become an activist on some level, in some way.'[6]

The time is right for action. We are at a stage, worldwide, when women's rights could leap into the future – or be thrust back into a Dark Age. There is a window of opportunity. The question is, can women hold that window open and help each other through to the next stage, or will it be slammed shut in their faces with the force of the backlash?

Keeping it open may require a lot more international feminist solidarity and consciousness than we have seen so far. There are urgent things to do – like writing to the Egyptian Government to protest the recent closure of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA) set up by Nawal El Saadawi in 1985. She and other feminists are locked in a court battle with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs which is trying to outlaw AWSA and transfer funds to the male-headed Women of Islam organization.[7]

Feminism is large, its strategies varied. The politics of the bedroom have begun to change. So have those of the schoolroom. But what feminism has not managed to change is the politics of the boardroom – be it the boardroom of the multinational corporation, the United Nations or the political party.

To get in there and to change the way it operates; to change the agenda; to subvert patriarchy at its strongly-fortified but weak and irrational heart has, I think, to be the challenge for feminism in the 1990s. It can be done, but it will require feminist action as bold as the theory. ■

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1 Based on information from *World's Women, Trends and Statistics,* United Nations, 1991 and *WIN News*, Women's International Network, 1991. **2** Laeticia Mukarasi tells her story in *Post Abolished*, The Women's Press, 1991. **3** Susan Faludi in *Blame it on Feminism*, Mother Jones Magazine (San Francisco), September/October 1991. **4** Marilyn French, *Beyond Power*, Jonathan Cape, 1986. **5** June Jordan interviewed by Pratibha Parmar, Feminist Review No 31, 1989. **6** Angela Davis interviewed by Kum-Kum Bhavnani, *Complexity, Activism, Optimism,* Feminist Review No 31, 1989. **7** Letters of protest to be sent to the The President, Kubba Palace, Cairo with copies to embassies and OEHR, 17 Aswan Square, Mohandessine, Giza, Egypt.

Purple politics and the white woman's dress

Can black and white unite under feminism? ***Amryl Johnson*** *takes a personal look at the politics of identity.*

A TEACHER who was working with some 17-year-old students on Sylvia Plath's poetry told me how she finally gave in to their request to visit the poet's grave. When they got there one of the girls threw herself on Plath's grave screaming 'I don't want to leave her! I don't want to leave her! Leave me here! Leave me with her!' Another member of the group, by way of explanation, said: 'It's all right, miss. She's a feminist.'

At the time the teacher told me of the incident we were being made forcefully aware of different sections within the women's movement. Lesbian Feminist... Socialist Feminist... Heterosexual Feminist... Radical Feminist... the list went on. I wryly mused on where I should place the teenager.

I did not see these definitions as identities so much as labels. They seemed to be saying not just 'this is what we are,' but more clearly 'this is *all* that we are.' I appreciate that the very essence of who we are, our experiences and ambitions cannot help but result in feminism meaning different things to different people. But the restriction seemed like a straight-jacket when there was so much more to be reaching for.

BRENDA PRINCE / FORMAT

Sindiwe

I HAD marvellous parents who were semi-literate but believed in education. There were eight of us. Girls and boys were treated the same. My mother would say: 'In the country there are women's jobs and men's jobs. But here [we were living in a Cape Flats township] everybody must do everything.'

Poor as they were, they put us all through school and at the age of 18 I had a teacher certificate and a job in a primary school. The first eye-opener was when I learned what a pittance I was going to earn. It was little more than a domestic servant – yet I'd have to maintain the smart appearance of a teacher.

Salaries are decided along both colour and gender lines in South Africa. I was at the bottom of a six-layered system which has the white man at the top and the African woman at the bottom. This is one of the reasons women's liberation took so long to catch on with African women. I wasn't going to fight any great battles to be on a level with an African man. He was nowhere I wanted to be. I wanted to be up there with the white man.

But having said that, I have never been able to split myself up. I can't say: 'Now I am black. Now I am a woman.' It doesn't matter to me why I am being pissed on. I feel very, very angry, whether it is because I am a woman or because I am black. And I have had problems with movements that ask me to concentrate on fighting racism – and forget about being a woman. Or those that say I should fight sexism – and forget about being black.

Anyway, almost immediately I started my teaching job disaster struck – I fell pregnant. Disciplinary action was taken against me and I was banned from teaching for two years. This is usual practice for black women teachers in South Africa.

I had no choice but to work as a domestic servant. It was hard, back-breaking work. But worse, it was dead-end. There should be progress in life. But if I was in domestic work how could I earn enough to make sure that my daughter would not be in domestic work? I vowed that I would make sure – somehow – that my children never went into domestic work ever.

When I was four months pregnant with my third child my husband left me. He decided that the job of being a husband was too difficult for him and went on an extended holiday. This was the most down period of my life. Here I was poorer than I had ever been. Being educated did not help – it made it worse. I could *see* what was wrong and it made me angry and frustrated.

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

After four years in domestic service I finally got another teaching job. But because I was a married woman they would only employ me on a yearly contract basis. I decided to qualify as a high school teacher and with my first pay check I enrolled myself in a correspondence course. Two years later I qualified.

For the next ten years my life was centred on education. I took an exam through the University of London and a degree in history through the University of South Africa – both by correspondence course. I joined the South African Committee for Higher Education and for the first time came into contact with coloured people and white people on an equal footing. We got to know each other as human beings. People listened to me – an African woman – and heard things they had not heard before. That really boosted my morale.

Then came the school boycotts of 1976, 1978, 1980. Fate is ironic. I was by now teaching in a prestigious white girls school. These girls had ambitions, futures mapped out. Meanwhile my gorgeous, clever, black children were doing nothing. It was insane. At meetings I spoke against the boycotts. I pleaded 'Bantu education is bad – but it's better than no education'. Those meetings reduced me to tears. I nearly became a mental case.

At this point I got a scholarship to Columbia University and fled to the US – leaving my teenage children with my mother and sister. On my student scholarship and stipend I was able to support myself and my family in South Africa. I had money! I had a room to myself! I had hot water, electricity, a gas stove!

I studied sociology and did a business course so that when I returned to South Africa I would work in industry to make money – and use the sociology for voluntary community work. I returned to South Africa – and I could not find a job. Here I was, in my mid-30s, with matric and two degrees – and unemployable. Only then did I at last see what I hadn't wanted to see: that in order to be gainfully employed I needed something I would never have – a white skin.

After several months the Cape Argus did a story on me. It got a lot of publicity. I was offered a job in the United Nations where I now work in New York. My children joined me, got higher education. And six months ago I got married again – on my own terms. No violence, no infidelity. I have managed a lot on my own. I can do it again.

I think that you have to take charge of life. You can't wait for others or for political movements to do it for you. Sure, you need to be aware, be in touch with movements. But you need to integrate that into your own personal struggle and forge ahead.

Sindiwe Magona has written a vivid autobiography, *To My Children's Children* (The Women's Press, London, 1991).

And where did black women fit into all this? It is nonsense to assume that because we are black there will be total harmony. In moving away from these labels we also were creating our own. Black Feminist... Feminist of Colour... Black Lesbian Feminist... And Womanist.

I was already well aware of the impact that writer Alice Walker's definition of 'womanist' was having on some black women – particularly those in the United States – when I was invited to talk at a conference held for teachers at Birmingham University on 'Black Female American Literature'. The main writers were Maya Angelou and Alice Walker; the books to be discussed, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and *The Colour Purple.*

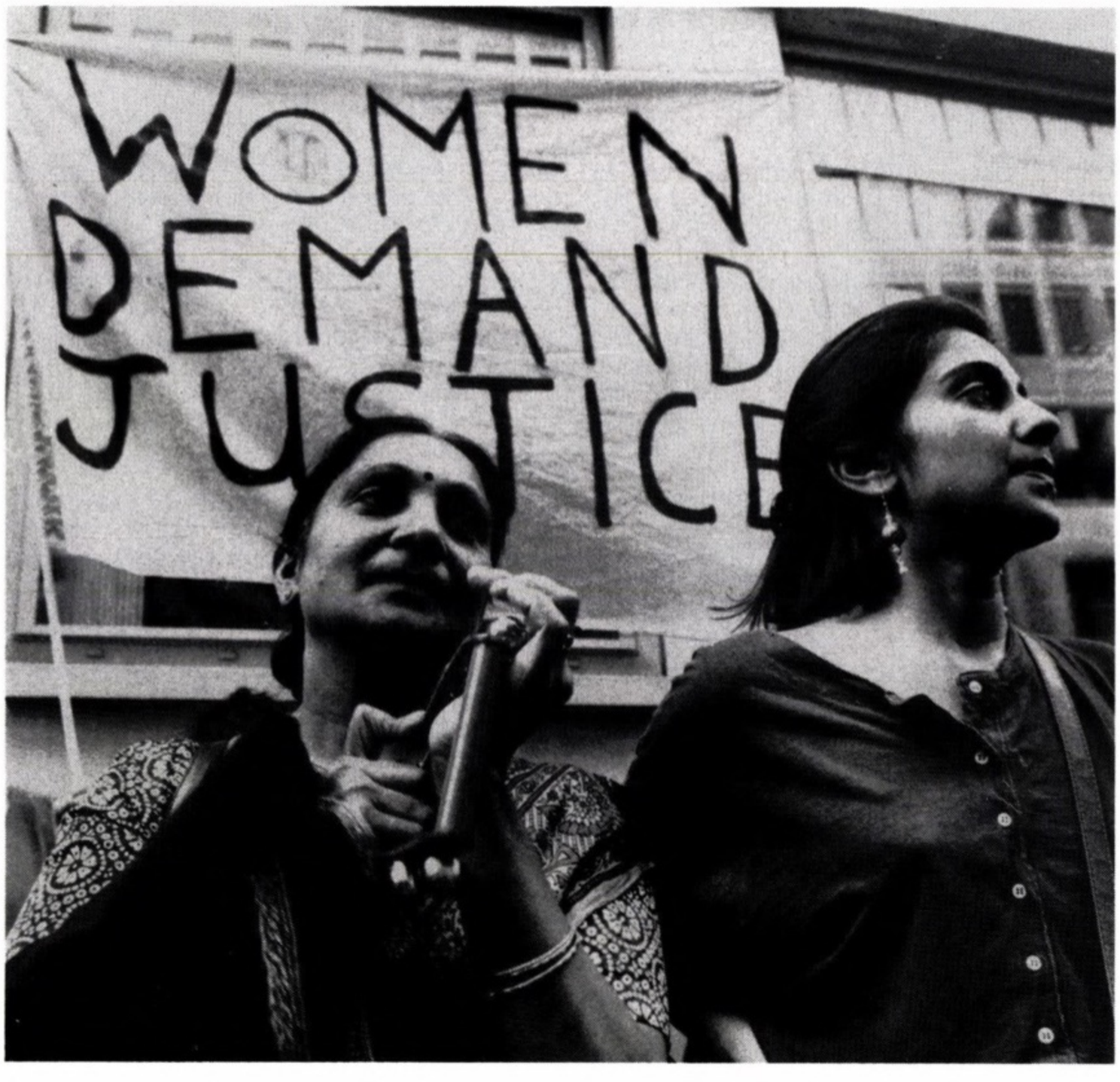
According to Alice Walker: 'Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.' These colours also seem significant when Maya Angelou writes: 'The dress I wore was lavender taffeta, and each time I breathed it rustled', but later goes on to say how daylight reveals it to be no more than 'a plain ugly cut-down from a white woman's once-was-purple throwaway'.

It is obvious why many black women find 'womanist' satisfying. It feels as if it was designed for them. Much richer, fuller and rounder, it encapsulates their experiences the way the word 'feminist' never could, and consequently cannot help but be a better and more comfortable fit than the white woman's dress.

Equally there are black women who have fought long and hard for what they want, are now well on their way to achieving it, don't take any nonsense from any man, are supportive towards other women and if you tried to attach a label to them – 'womanist' or other – would throw it back at you.

Yet the experiences of black women and white women are clearly different. Black women in white-dominated Britain, for example, are having to deal with as much racism as ever. Nothing can make you immune to it. Not education. Not success. There will always be whites who see you as a threat. You are black, therefore inferior, the descendant of those who were treated as being less than dogs. So what are you doing with as great a command of English as themselves and now in a position to live next door? We are upsetting their values.

Suspicion and mistrust because of how they have been treated has fostered racism in blacks towards whites. It has not been easy for those black women joining feminist groups thinking, 'I am among other women so will find some comfort here', to



PAM ISHERWOOD /FORMAT

Issues that unite: British women picket the Home Office in support of Sara Thornton, Kiranjit Ahluwalia and Amelia Rossiter, who were given life sentences for killing their violent husbands in self-defence.

find themselves on the receiving end of blatant racism as well as having to deal with their everyday lives. There were undoubtedly some white women who feared their burden would be twice as heavy and the journey twice as slow when black women joined their groups.

But there are faults on both sides. I confess that I was counting notches when I asked an English friend if there was anything in her own history which could compare with the rape of slavery in mine. The thought passing through my head was: 'Look how much more I, as a black woman, have suffered compared with you, a white woman'.

I am far from the only black woman who has fallen into this trap. I have heard tales of women who, before forming their own black groups, joined ones which were predominantly white assuming that the weight of their experiences would give them the right to lead or that the other women would look up to them, envying their burden. I also know of an instance where friction and the subsequent demise of a supposedly multi-ethnic group came about for precisely this reason. There are lessons to be learnt by both sides.

For instance, I was young and foolish when I asked the question about slavery. I would not dream of doing so nowadays. I now understand that experiences are relative. The white friend who talks of a childhood where there was abysmal poverty, of vicious beatings or sexual abuse, talks of the struggle which has taken her from where she was to where she is now. This is her own understanding. The collective suffering of millions of blacks being sold into slavery is mine. I could sympathize, but not having been through her experiences cannot truly comprehend any more than she, who could sympathize with mine, could truly comprehend. Nevertheless, her experiences are as totally vital to her as mine are to me.

I am a black woman and I am strong. Contrary to the myth, not all black women are strong. I know my resilience and I recognize my determination. I know that there are feminists and there are feminists. There are women who during the daytime wear a badge which shines more brightly than anyone else's yet on social occasions you would not recognise the giggly female hanging onto the dull boyfriend's every word as being the same woman.

But as a poet/writer who leads Creative Writing workshops in schools I am well aware that this generation boasts young women who will not be getting engaged at the age of 18, who will insist on as good an education as their brothers – or in some instances a better one. We look to this generation for greater unity and better understanding. But that is the future.

What about now? There are women being raped and brutalized by their husbands or lovers, too afraid and in other instances too private to prosecute. Sometimes these women may speak to us with a facial or bodily expression or they may let something slip during a conversation. Some of us are stronger than others. Whoever these women are, black, white, women of colour, often all they need is moral support, someone who will reach out and say: 'It's OK. I/we are here for you. Now go ahead and do what you know needs to be done.' We have to reach out and continue reaching out to them.

Let's be aware of ethnic, class and individual history. But let us concentrate on supporting each other. There can never be a total agreement about what a Feminist Movement should be. The very nature of the hunger and determination which motivates us may appear to be taking us in different directions as we reach for separate goals. We cannot deny that part of ourselves. Yet, these goals are one and the same. When we stop fighting and bickering among ourselves, we realize that what we are up against, more often than not, is oppression. Oppression from the opposite sex, in some form or fashion. There are bridges we can build.

We can have more forums where women from different ethnic backgrounds can sit and talk through their differences and be honest with each other. We should begin with this understanding: 'Yes, I am different from you. How could you expect otherwise? But as women we are united in our vulnerability. We are all of us in danger of being victims. Let's deal with these issues which will help us to unite.' This may sound simplistic but it is a fact. It has to be done. We have to build bridges.

I have as many white friends as I do black ones, true and honest women who have stood by me through the years. Many of my friends have survived and have succeeded against the odds. The odds being men who did their best to reduce them to the rubble in order to deal with them. There is something I have promised myself and I am determined to do it. I will bring them together in one room. When we raise our glasses, the toast will be a simple one: 'To us!' ■

Amryl Johnson has written many books including *Shackles* ***(Sable Press, 1983)*** and *Sequins for a Ragged Hem* ***(Virago, 1988).*** She was born in Trinidad and has lived in Britain since the age of 11.

AGONY!

GREAT AND IMPORTANT MEN – past and present – could have avoided many GREAT MISTAKES had they listened to women. Here they seek advice from our Agony Aunt Emmeline. She, after a fashion, gives it...

Dear Emmeline,
There I was. Just about to send it to the publisher – the *magnum opus* – and in comes the wife, saying:
'I hope you have an analysis of gender in there...'
'Who?'
'Gender. Women. Difference. Oppression along gender lines. It's fundamental.'
'Ah! Women's liberation you mean? Of course that will come with the socialist revolution.'
'Not good enough.'
'What do you mean "not good enough"?'
'Doesn't necessarily follow.'
'Oh ...'
What do you think? Is she right? And what can I do about it?'

Yours flustered,
Karl M
London

Emmeline replies: Well, start again, Karl. There's this little old conceptual package called 'patriarchy' you could try unravelling. It might spark off a really radical thought or two...

Dear Emmeline,
It's not fair. They are being mean to me. Not buying oil from me like they used to. What's the matter with them? All I did was show off a bit. You know, flashing the equipment, showing them what it could do. Why shouldn't I be proud of it? They are proud of theirs...

Yours confused,
Saddam H,
Baghdad

Emmeline replies: It's true... You are not alone in your preoccupations. But have you tried that game where you take a peek down the shaft of that SuperGun of yours and pull the trigger at the same time? It's supposed to be quite an experience – for a man. Alternatively you could try growing up. I hear there are men who have managed it.

Dear Emmeline,
It seemed such a great idea. A huge dam, thousands of barrages and loads of hydroelectric power for Indian industry. And what's happening? Those little green women are linking up with tribals, hugging trees, making the life of Bank officials a misery. And now those women are refusing to get out of the way before we flood the region. But what is really getting to me is the way the cleaning lady chuckles and goes, "tut, tut. Narmada dam, heh? What a b—— up!" What can I do?

Yours bothered,
Lewis P,
Washington

Emmeline replies: It's a bit late in the day to be asking for advice! Why don't you take on board what the women in the area are saying and pull your World Bank out of the scheme? You know it stinks. Oh, and try consulting your cleaner in future.

Dear Emmeline,
Don't laugh, OK? So I'm having a repetitive dream which I can't interpret. There are all these angry women who are booing and whistling me off the platform and shouting: 'Dora! Dora! Dora!'. What can it mean?

Yours anxiously,
Sigmund F,
Vienna

Emmeline replies: Surely you remember Dora? Your classic case study of hysteria? That 15 year-old girl whose strange aversion to sexual advances from her father's best friend was caused by her own secret sexual longing for her father and her jealousy over his liaison with another woman. Fitted in neatly with the Oedipus stuff didn't it? So neatly that you glossed over details indicating that she had for many years been sexually abused by her venereal diseased father, who was now eagerly passing on his beloved daughter to his best friend. Need I say more?

Dear Emmeline
While in Greece on holiday with my brothers I fell for this local woman called Helen. Was she gorgeous or was she gorgeous! Anyway, I couldn't leave her behind with that wimp of a husband of hers so I did the manly thing and kidnapped her. Now her husband's family have started a war against my family and my mad sister Cassandra is prophesying doom. I'm not giving Helen back, that's for sure. Besides, I think she is beginning to fancy me a little... What should I do?

Yours in a quandary,
Paris,
Troy

Emmeline replies: Has it crossed your mind to ask her whether she would like to stay with you or go back to her husband – or (more sensibly) ditch you both? And that Cassandra sounds like a sensible woman to me.

Dear Emmeline,
I don't know if I count as man – but millennia of patriarchy have addressed me as He. My problem began when one day I was idly playing mudpies. I'd made some little joke figures with silly features – some sillier than others. Something tickled my nose. I sneezed – and the blasted things started moving, breathing and other activities I'd rather not go into. Anyway, they have run riot and made such a mess of the world that no angel or deity in their right mind would want to go anywhere near it. What should I do?

Yours guiltily,
God,
Ubiquitous Hall

Emmeline replies: Don't ask me. It's your mess, mate. Anyway, I'm fed up with this traditional womanly role of listener/nanny/mother. I've got a life of my own to get on with, right? Go and hassle some bloke!

ILLUSTRATION: KATE CHARLESWORTH

Silicon tricks and the two dollar woman

***Cynthia Enloe** opens up the new high tech world of global work to see what – or who – is inside.*

ROSHINI KEMPADOO/FORMAT

A HUNDRED Barbadian women sit at rows of computer terminals. They enter 300,000 ticket reservations flowing from 2,000 daily flights of just a single US airline. In the same building one floor above them other women enter data from American medical insurance claims. Their average hourly wage is only $2.50 compared with the same company's $9.50 hourly wage for its US-based employees.

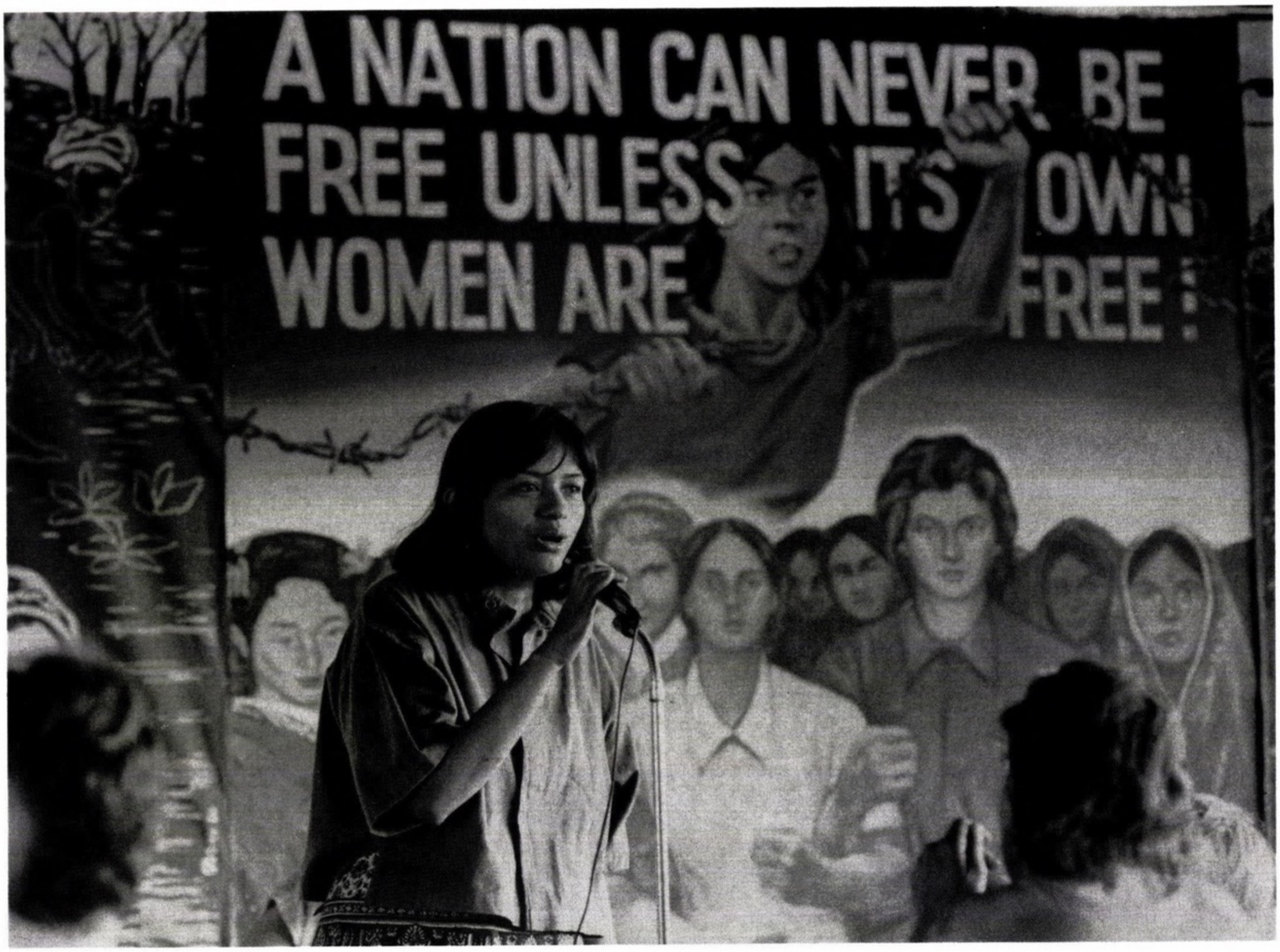
If you make a plane reservation nowadays more than likely it will be processed by these women sitting at their work stations in Barbados, or their sisters in Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, Haiti, India, Singapore, China or Ireland.

Although low paid, de-skilling and eye-straining, data entry work is seen as a step up from work as a chambermaid in the Barbadian tourist industry. And these island women proudly distinguish themselves from their countrywomen working in dusty, hot garment factories.

Information processing is following previously feminized garment, textile, toy and electronics assembly lines in the Third World. Along with airline tickets and insurance claims, women in poor countries today are processing the First World's consumer warranty cards, phone books, scientific articles and pornographic novels.

It is hard to keep pace with these new twists in the First World-Third World relationship. Just as you get a handle on Levi's use of Filipino women for making jeans to be sold on London's Oxford Street, you hear that Hong Kong entrepreneurs are setting up their own assembly lines in El Salvador and Taiwanese investors are opening factories in Lesotho. What, then, is the 'Third World' in the 1990s?

Even the flow of management techniques no longer seems to run from North to South. Since the mid-1980s, companies have been taking their labour models perfected in Asia and Latin America and transplanting them to Ireland, Scotland, Eastern Europe and to the Chinatowns of



BRENDA PRINCE / FORMAT

Agenda benders: Filipino women are insisting that equal pay and sexual harrassment are union matters.

North America.

Still, amid all of these surprising changes, one thing remains remarkably consistent: cheap female labour. It's as true under the New World Order as the old.

But let's look more closely at the glib phrase: cheap labour. Even the least internationally conscious television viewer of the 1990s knows that companies are forever on the global prowl for 'cheap labour'. It sounds as though there is some labour power out there that is *inherently* low-priced. More realistic – if longer winded – is the phrase 'labour made cheap'. It draws our attention to the making, to the actions needed to *turn* someone's labour into low-priced labour.

What makes one person's labour cheap – and another's not? Race and class are potent factors – but not by any means the only ones. If an airlines reservations processor's race is the key to her low wages and lack of promotion then why aren't there Barbadian men sitting there at computers entering airline reservations?

And if class were the sole explanation then why were the women going on about how this work suits their mothering duties? Class and race are not the only threads that have to be woven into the fabric of exploitation to make profits from blue jeans and computers. Gender is the most powerful determining factor.

So what does it take to cheapen a Barbadian, Jamaican, Chinese-American, or Scottish woman's labour? It takes belief that the work being performed is not skilled. It is natural. This belief relies on notions about women's natural inclinations – for example, their natural aptitude for sewing, food preparation, housekeeping or physical nurturing. A woman who sews Marks and Spencer's jeans or who cans Dole's pineapple can be paid as if she were doing something that took little or no skill.

Second, a woman's labour can be cheapened more readily if long stretches of routine, yet careful repetition – as in indexing the latest scientific texts or assembling silicon chips – can be presented as naturally suited to the feminine character. This denies the reality that both can take superhuman patience, together with very unnatural levels of visual concentration.

Third, a woman's labour is cheapened if the employee herself and large parts of her community can be convinced that her wages are merely supplemental; that the 'real' wage in any Barbadian, Sri Lankan or Lesotho household is being earned by the adult man of the family.

This is not the end of the list. Women must be thought of as apolitical, docile, naive. Such a stereotype makes bosses think they can get away with paying women little to work in unsafe conditions.

But it's not enough to fix one's gaze on the factory floor if you want to find out how this unequal 'world order' is being sustained and expanded. Teaching and enforcing ideas about women's 'patience', about their 'reluctance' to unionize happen outside as well as inside the workplace. True, some patriarchal ideas are especially

exploited by sophisticated managers and thereby gain new potency. But generally they derive from social practices and policies outside the workplace.

For this reason Third World feminists have been insisting that researchers look beyond the factory walls and become a lot more curious about the politics of marriage, parenting, sexuality. Each of these provides a plank in the platform for international economic relations. But this should not let the company executive or governmental ally off the hook. They should not get away with saying: 'Oh, it's not our fault; we just adapt to the local culture'.

A woman's own experience has to be taken seriously. When a Mexican woman working for the Johnson clothing company explains that she cannot come to a meeting of the new women-run union because her husband will be angry, it does not simply mean she is apolitical or docile. It means that the power relations inside the woman's marriage make it easier for Johnson managers to keep Mexican women workers' wages low. Likewise, when a Filipino woman working for Mattel – the toy manufacturing giant – explains that she prefers working in a foreign factory because she can send money home to her landless rural parents, it does not mean she is lacking in ambition. It means that the daughters' roles in the peasant economy help multinational factory operations in the Philippines.

Policy-makers and opposition activists alike will happily pretend that these women workers are marginal to the country's development. Meanwhile women's labour is supporting the larger system of production and privilege.

Can this be changed? I think so. There are working women's movements emerging now in the Third World that have been profoundly influenced by feminism – both the practice and the analysis. These movements know the need to juggle the double burdens of home work and factory work. So, for instance, meetings are scheduled at times when women can get away from cooking or childcare. They also take on difficult, personal issues like domestic violence and how to change men. The Mexican garment workers' September 19th Union made both of these a high priority after men had objected to their women companions going out in the evenings and threatened them with beatings if they weren't home to cook dinner.

What is deemed a 'union issue' is changing too. For example, the Korean Women Workers' Association has been challenging companies' reasons for paying male employees more than women because the former were, the management argued, the 'breadwinners'. And sexual politics at work have come out of the closet.

For years women who have been pressed into having sex with a foreman or manager as a condition for keeping their job or getting a promotion have been told that they were to blame. Other women on the assembly line often ridiculed the harassed women for being the object of favouritism.

But Sri Lankan factory women's groups have made sexual harassment a major issue. They have linked it to problems such as the threat of rape facing women who have to work night shifts and travel home in the dark. In feminist unions sexuality and violence are now considered as political as wage rates and the right to strike.

Mind-bending revolutions are happening in the global economy, involving more and more women. But there is one innovation that might prove to be the most far-reaching. It has little to do with computer technology – but a lot to do with feminism. Feminist research is revealing what is really going on. And feminist strategies are challenging the means by which women's labour is made cheap; the way a job is turned into 'women's work'.

Finally, feminism is clearly saying that we won't ever get to know about how international politics works or find ways to change it if we are not prepared to take account of the personal life of the Mexican garment-maker or the Barbadian data-processor. ■

Cynthia Enloe is author of several books including *Bananas, Beaches and Bases (Pandora, 1989).* She teaches at Clark University, Massachusetts, US.

Cheryl

WHEN I was very young I worked in the sex industry. I am not going to describe the type of work I did, mainly because it would sound coy or worse. Many women would prefer to say they were prostitutes than to describe some of the extraordinarily silly activities in those grey areas of the sex industry which straddle entertainment, catering, theatre and therapeutic services.

Anyway, I was also a student and a passionate feminist. A sex worker, a feminist lawyer and I established the sex workers' rights movement in our city, Melbourne, in 1979.

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

We were laughed at by the media, ignored by sex workers and vilified by some sections of the women's movement. The organization which we began, the Prostitutes Collective of Victoria, now has offices and staff. It provides services and information to female, male and transexual sex workers and it is now well supported by Australian feminists.

Those women who regard sex workers as collaborators in male sexual power and violence or as victims of the same are much quieter now than they were in the 1970s. This is the result of changes that have occurred both in the women's movement and the sex workers' movement.

For us the first decade was one of struggle. We struggled to place ourselves in the women's movement and to develop a feminist analysis of sex work. A major change that occurred during this time was the extension of the feminist right to be heard and the right to self-determination to include sexual minorities and sex workers.

Today sex workers are usually asked to participate in most forums where sex industry issues are being discussed. No longer are 'feminists' invited to speak 'on prostitution' in the absence of sex workers and, thankfully, there are no more debates set up with sex workers on one side and feminists on the other.

So far so good. But when we get down to practical matters things have not greatly improved. Anti-prostitution laws and the persecution of sex workers created by the whore stigma remains in virtually all corners of the world.

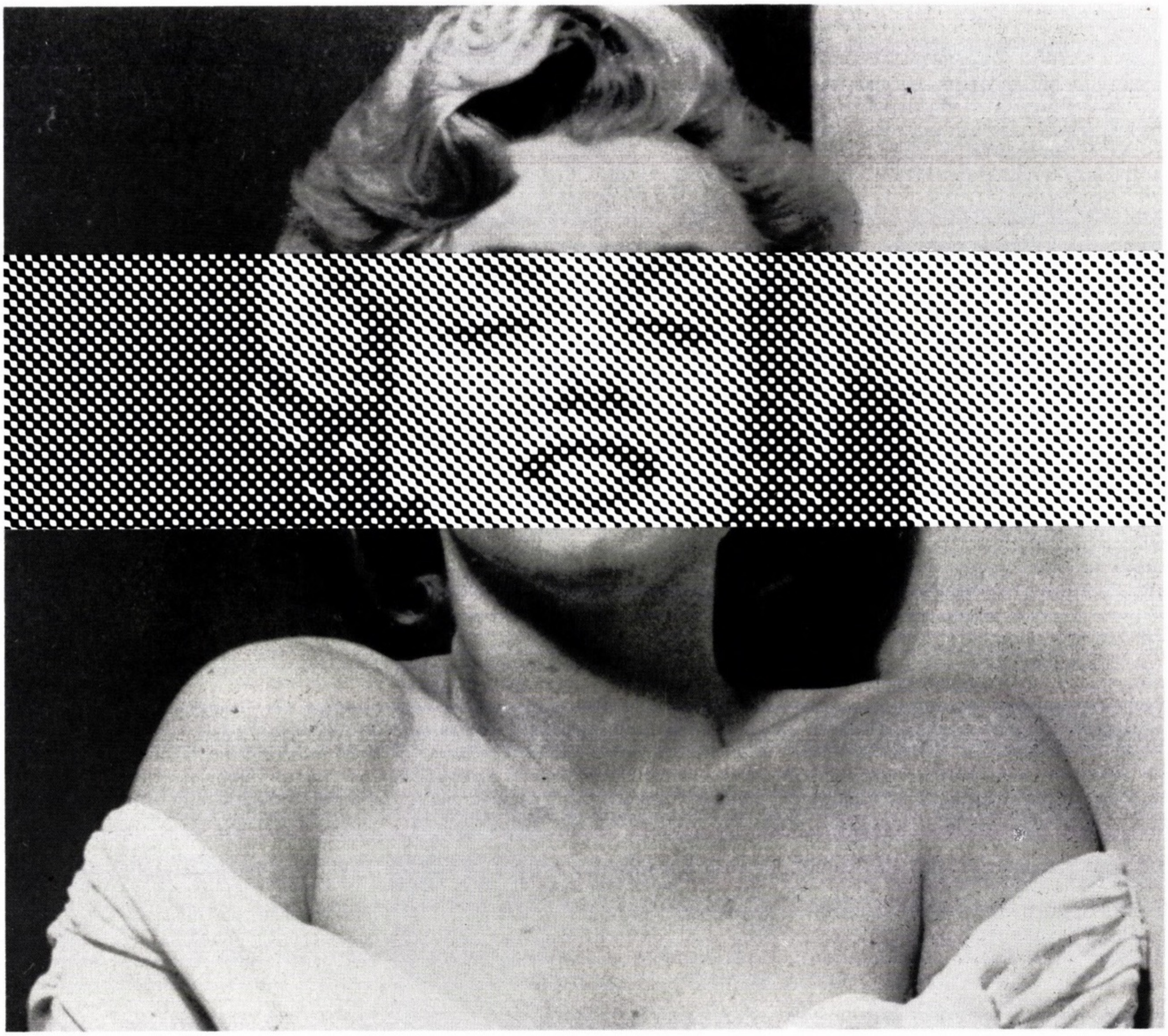
The exploitative nature of sex still concerns feminists. And rightly so. Sex work is extremely exploitative in industrialized countries and even more so in developing countries. But is exploitation an inevitable feature of selling sex?

Sex workers say 'no'. They say that the exploitative aspects of sex work are legal and industrial matters. When clients and bosses urge the sex worker to have sex without a condom this is a health and safety issue akin to those faced by workers in many other industries. The same when sex workers are forced to work long hours in substandard conditions and are not allowed to refuse certain clients or are subject to curfews and other abuses. Bosses – both male and female – are often to blame for these exploitative industrial conditions, although it is clearly criminalization and stigmatization of sex work that creates conditions of systematic exploitation.

The process of developing worker solidarity and making collective demands remains the best course in any industry for eliminating exploitation.

Or in the words of Brazilian activist Gabriella Leite: 'I look forward to the day when every prostitute can put their hand on their heart and say "I am a worker", and every worker can put their hand on their heart and say "I am a prostitute".'

Cheryl Overs is now a consultant on HIV, Aids and sex work. She is based in Paris.



CAMERA PRESS

The **Real** Woman

What is a woman anyway? ***Nina Silver*** *charts a course through sex, roles, paganism and love for her dog.*

'You walk like a soldier.' The sneer in the accusation startled me. Focused on my inner world and stepping determinedly, my body was free to let my arms swing the way they are supposed to when you walk.

This was in the late 1950s, before women's liberation. The words were spoken by my mother who had been brought up to believe that if a woman didn't suppress the natural impulses of her mind, body and heart she wasn't being a lady – and was therefore not worthy or redeemable as a human being.

Even before that childhood challenge to my sex identity, I'd thought a great deal about what it means to be a woman, what is really entailed in being a man. As a little girl I was keenly aware of the sex-role stereotyping in our culture and hated it.

I observed my mother submerging her intelligence and opinions beneath my father because, according to her, his ego was fragile and needed boosting – and should be boosted because he was a man. In kindergarten the boys were assigned to play with electric trains while the girls could only potter with miniature kitchen sets. This made me very indignant. I ignored the tiny stoves, sinks and pots, and

taught myself how to read bigger words.

The world has changed somewhat since I was a child but the same questions have remained with me. What is a man? And what is a woman? Apparently, my possessing female genitalia wasn't enough to qualify me for being a woman. It also involved other things I needed to learn.

I failed miserably. Particularly in those early years. I was accused of embodying qualities that offended both the existing norms and the people who made the accusations. At different times my accusers charged that I: looked like a boy (when I kissed another girl); looked like a girl (when I was developing breasts); thought too rationally (like a boy – my father called me 'Univac' after the first computer); was too emotional (like a girl); was a lesbian (because I was assertive); and – after all that – acted as though I weren't human.

In high school, when my budding sexual desire for female classmates was unhappily still relegated to the realm of fantasy, the mother of a nice senior boy I was dating warned him about me. She'd heard I was on drugs (which wasn't true) and that I was a lesbian (which wasn't true – yet – either). I felt amused by the first allegation and complimented by the second. To me, being regarded as gay meant that people saw me as someone who had enough personal identity not to need males or the male-dominated culture to define me. A lesbian, unconcerned about securing a husband, was exempt from most role-playing at being a 'sweet young thing' who shouldn't get her hands dirty, sprint across the street, fix the faucet or tell somebody off.

By the time I entered college, cataloguing people's similarities and differences had become my passion. I decided that I couldn't do anything about the language or what people thought, but I *could* try to develop my strengths so that whatever people said about me wouldn't have any power. If people wanted to equate a female adult or a lesbian with being 'mannish', who cared? Those qualities made me more, not less, of a woman. I met many lesbians who were vibrant, strong, women-identified women. And these women were saying that what our culture defines as 'feminine' is in its own right, strong, necessary, and good.

This challenged me, for despite the fact that a woman is not supposed to possess the stronger characteristics attributed to men, I had actually found it easier to exhibit traits relegated to the 'non-female' end of the spectrum. I would now find the perfect balance and support in the gay community. I rejoiced in eager anticipation.

Alas, in communing with the gay world I discovered to my horror that the polarized butch-femme roles of gay women I'd always heard about did indeed exist and my precious theory was shot to hell. I saw how in some lesbian and gay relationships – just as in heterosexual ones – the rigid sex-typed roles of 'man' and 'woman' kept people prisoners of culturally acceptable human behaviour. Both partners were – as far as I could tell – genitally women. *So what then did constitute a real woman*?

By now I was a psychology student and reading voraciously. I discovered enthralling facts that only complicated my research. Some African cultures reversed roles. That was great, I thought, but wait a minute... that meant there were circumscribed rules to follow. That couldn't be very good, could it? Men who acted as women do in our culture, and women who were male-like? What was the use of role reversal as long as there were still roles to reverse? Why couldn't people simply act as they felt?

ABIGAIL HEYMAN/MAGNUM

Girls will be boys and boys will be girls...

By the time I graduated college there were lots more studies out on both humans and animals. I read, fascinated, about the male seahorse which gestates the eggs that the female seahorse lays in his pouch. Another article reported that the tropical clownfish changes its sex according to the reproductive needs of its community.

What men investigators had determined was natural, aggressive, sexual behaviour in some adult male primates was countered by women who were showing – surprise! – that many female monkeys were sexually

Why not a train? Or a car? Or a plane? Four year old ponders gender role stereotyping

FRED MAYER/MAGNUM

assertive and promiscuous, even when they were already pregnant.

And on it went. By this time, even the local newspapers were featuring stories stating that men had hormonal cycles as well as women, who now shouldn't have to take all the bad press for being emotional during 'that time of the month'. When I read that male mono-rail operators in Japan were given time off during the sensitive points in their cycles, I was overjoyed.

Meanwhile data was coming out that the maternal instinct is stimulated by the mother's smelling of the newborn and I struggled with the possibility that maybe there was something to biology after all. But no; that would give men power to call women weak and emotional, power to relegate women back to the kitchen. I collected more data, grateful for my 'male' analytical mind and hating myself for even thinking in those terms.

Maybe underneath my passion for learning was an inferior female body. But that couldn't be. Trying to calm my whirling brain, I had just treated myself to New York City's Big Apple Circus and seen the only two-women trapeze act in the world. One of the women had to be as strong as a man in order to hold herself in the air and her partner, too.

If my outward genitals didn't qualify me as a woman, then it must be more subtle biology. Enter John Money, Johns Hopkins University psychologist and sex researcher, who said that the XX and XY chromosome myth was very nice – tying the sexes into neat packages – but untrue.

We have assumed, he wrote 'that there are two quite separate roads, one leading from XY chromosomes at conception to manhood, the other from XX chromosome at conception to womanhood. But scientists are uncovering a different picture. There are not two roads, but one road with a number of forks where each of us turns in either the male or the female direction. You become male or female by stages. Most of us turn smoothly in the same direction at each fork.'

I read, fascinated, about how the many different forks could produce: females with internalized male organs; women with an 'overabundance' of testosterone which gives them muscular strength greater than the average female; hermaphrodites possessing an XX chromosome pattern born with both male and female internal organs; and the extremely rare case of males possessing XX chromosome patterns.

This was interesting, but left my basic question unanswered: how could I determine what a real woman or a real man was if biology was so varied?

Meanwhile my world was rearranging itself at a dizzying pace. All around me, lesbians were buying houses and having children together via artificial insemination; my feminist friends were growing their hair long again and becoming more 'feminine'; and open transsexuals joined the women's, gay, and bisexual liberation movements.

Frantic, I focussed the bulk of my affection on my dog and decided to be celibate for a while.

Clearly, the sex of the person one relates to didn't have a thing to do with one's own sex. Neither did chromosomes, times of the month, hormones, whether or not someone lactates, how one earns a living, or what they do in their spare time. There had to be a fresh insight apart from the books I was reading or the people I was talking to, something that would end my search once and for all.

I got interested in the pagan movement and finally, one day, I invented a transcendental experience. My awareness took the form of a voice. It was – and is – my own voice. It has authority, this voice that somehow got lost in the shuffle of turning book pages, discussion groups, questions. For a long time this voice has needed to know that it exists. How can we know who and where we are until we sort through everything that *isn't* important, *isn't* real?

I remind myself that we are all bound together by our humanity: we laugh, cry, eat, grieve, pee, yell, feel joy, have orgasms. Embracing the life force inside myself that grants us these feelings is the most I can ask of life. And if I feel my own energy, and act according to my desires, then that's who I am. If I am considered a woman, it's because I'm a human being who happens to have *observable* female genitals. But that's as far as it goes. We're constantly inventing ourselves, or allowing ourselves to be invented by others.

When I'm in the present, labels don't cross my mind. I'm too busy simply... being. ■

Nina Silver is a counsellor, writer, singer and composer living in New York.

Graciela

My name is Graciela Tapia and I was born 37 years ago in a small Peruvian mountain village in the province of Apurimac. When I was eight my mother sent me to Lima to live with my aunt and uncle because my father did not like me.

I arrived in Lima without documents and so I could not go to school. I started to work in various houses as a domestic servant. I did not make friends with anyone who could have advised me about life or sex.

At the age of 14 I met the person who was to become the father of my children. It happened like this: as a small child I'd heard my mother say that when a man kissed a woman that man became her husband. So when he kissed me I said: 'Now you are my husband'. We got married when I was just 15 years old, he was 21. I knew nothing about sex. No one had told me where babies came from.

I was very disconcerted when my husband told me that we must join our bodies. The first time we made love I was frightened and ashamed. But afterwards I felt happy. To hold someone's body close to mine felt so good it made me feel happy.

I was very surprised when I became pregnant. I didn't want to leave the house. I wanted to wait for the stork. My in-laws found this very amusing. 'How could you know how to go with a man and not know how to give birth?', they asked. My mother-in-law then explained it to me but so badly it made me very worried.

The first year we lived together was the best, but as soon as I gave birth everything began to change. I felt so happy with my baby, I lived to take care of him. My husband got jealous and started going out with other women and mistreating me.

For any reason he would insult me. He taunted me with the fact that I was illiterate whilst he had almost finished secondary school. He would not give me money and spent on drink the money I earned washing clothes. And he forced me to have sex with him. Sometimes I gave in because I did not want the children to hear us fighting. But often we came to blows. During sex I felt humiliated, furious and disgusted. I became like a stone, closed my eyes and imagined I was with another man.

Now that my children have grown up I no longer want to live like this. I understand now that as a woman I have dignity and that nobody should abuse me. For the past few months I have been insisting that he leave. He does not want to but I am going to force him to. I'm seeking legal advice.

I'm also in this women's group which produces radio programmes in this suburb and it is doing me a lot of good. I've always wanted to learn and share new things. On the programme we express our problems through radio theatre – I do dramatizations which are all based on real life situations. We know many women who are beaten and raped by their husbands. But many now are not putting up with it anymore. As for me, I get on well with my children and I'm teaching them to be caring and sharing in their sexual relations.

Graciela Tapia was interviewed by **Sonia Luz Carrillo**.

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

Few parts of the world remain untouched by feminism. But how much have women's lives actually changed during the past 20 years? The latest UN statistics tell the story.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

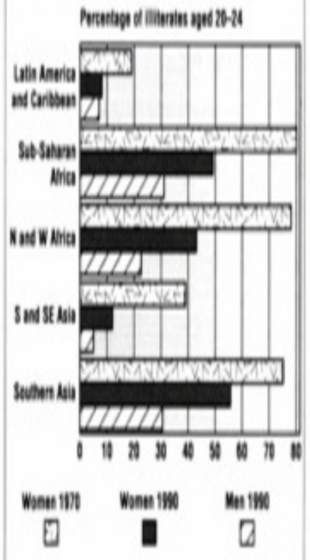
Women have made big steps forward since 1970 – but huge gaps persist. Many girls and women still do not receive equal access to education and training.

Literacy

● The number of illiterate people in the world is rising due to population growth. But female illiteracy has risen fastest, from 543 million women in 1970 to 597 million in 1985. Male illiteracy rose from 348 million to 352 million.

● Three quarters of women aged 25 and over are still illiterate in much of Africa and Asia.

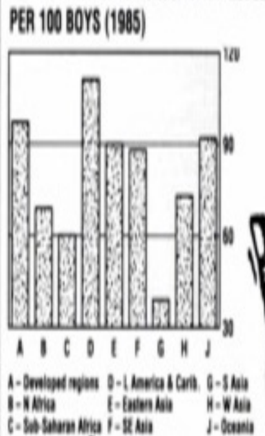
ILLITERACY AMONGST WOMEN HAS FALLEN BUT IS STILL MUCH HIGHER THAN AMONGST MEN



Schooling

● Girls have caught up with boys in some parts of the world, but still lag behind in others.

GIRLS ENROLLED AT SECONDARY LEVEL PER 100 BOYS (1985)



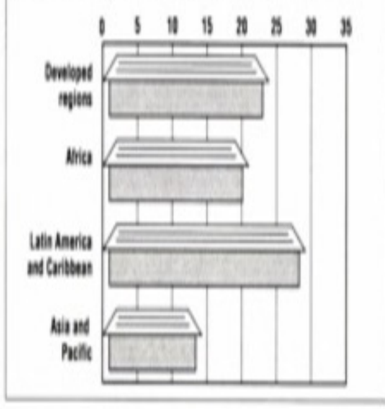
HOME AND FAMILY

Changes in family life over the past 20 years have given women more opportunity. But their struggle to balance family life, household and economic responsibilities has got harder.

THE FAMILY

● In some regions up to 30% of households are now headed by women due to changing marriage patterns, life expectancy, male migration, wars.

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY WOMEN



● The proportion of divorced women has increased worldwide – in the rich world from 2.8 per cent in 1970 to 6.4 per cent in 1985. The proportion of women never married increased too – in Africa from 23 to 33 per cent.

● Births outside marriage are now 40 per cent of the total in some countries of Africa, the Caribbean and Northern Europe. In the US, Australia and Aotearoa/NZ the number doubled or tripled.

● In Norway women provide 67 per cent of formal and informal care – but one third of elderly women have no-one to ask for help.

Domestic violence

Reports of domestic violence are increasing worldwide

● India had 999 registered cases of women murdered in dowry conflicts in 1985, 1,319 in 1986 and 1,786 in 1987.

● In Colombia one in five bodily injuries during 1982/3 was due to conjugal violence and 94 per cent of those hospitalized were battered women.

● A third of US female homicide victims in 1984 died at the hands of their husband or partner.

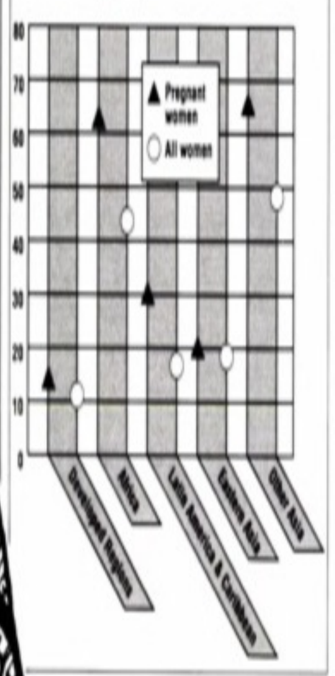
HEALTH AND CHILD BEARING

Almost everywhere women live longer than men and die of different causes. Pregnancy and childbearing expose women to an array of health risks that in many developing countries are a major cause of death.

Health

● Women's life expectancy is increasing everywhere. But half the women in Africa and Asia are malnourished causing anaemia.

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WITH ANAEMIA, AGED 15 – 49, (1980)



Birth

● Women are having fewer children. The average has dropped from 2.6 in 1970 to 1.8 in 1990 in the rich world; in the poor world from a range of 5-7 to 3-6 children. Caribbean women now have the fewest children – 1.7 is the average in Cuba.

● Contraceptive use has increased in the poor world from under 15 per cent of sexually active women in 1960/5 to 33 per cent in the early 1980s.

● A third of all those with HIV in the world are women. Aids is now the leading cause of death among women aged 20-40 in major cities of Western Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas, including New York.

● Women who become pregnant face a risk of death due to pregnancy that is 80 to 600 times greater in the poor world than in the rich.

● Of 8,000 abortions in Bombay opted for after parents learned the sex of the foetus through amniocentesis only one would have been a boy.

POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE

Women almost everywhere have the right to vote, and make up more than half of all electorates. But they are still blocked from top positions and play only a minor role in high-level political and economic decision-making in most countries.

● Of 159 UN member States only six (Iceland, Ireland, Nicaragua, Norway, Dominica and the Philippines) were politically headed by women at the end of 1990.

● Only 3.5 per cent of the world's cabinet ministers are women, and women have no ministerial positions in 93 countries in the world.

● In only three countries do women hold more than 20 per cent of ministerial level Government positions – Norway, Bhutan and Dominica.

Percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women

Rich world	1975	1987	Poor world	1975	1987
Australia	0.0	6.6	Kenya	3.5	1.7
Aotearoa	4.6	14.4	Mozambique	–	16.0
Canada	3.4	9.6	Argentina	8.6	4.7
UK	4.3	6.3	Cuba	–	33.9
US	3.7	5.3	India	4.3	8.3
Norway	15.5	34.4	Mexico	5.0	10.8
USSR	32.1	34.5	Iraq	–	13.2
Japan	1.4	1.4	China	22.6	21.2

● Only three per cent of senior positions in the UN are held by women.

● In the former Eastern bloc women made up 25% of parliamentary bodies – but recent elections show a significant drop as a result of political changes.

Votes for women

The first countries to enfranchise women were:	
Aotearoa/NZ	1893
Australia	1901
Finland	1906
Norway	1913
Denmark	1915
USSR	1917
Canada/UK	1918

The most recent were:	
Vanuatu	1980
Iraq	1980
South Africa (not Africans)	1979
Guinea Bissau	1977
Cape Verde	1975
Jordan	1973
Switzerland	1971

WORK AND MONEY

Since 1970 women's share in the workforce has risen. But segregation of jobs and discrimination at work persist and there is a big gap between what women produce and what they earn. Access to training and capital is poor.

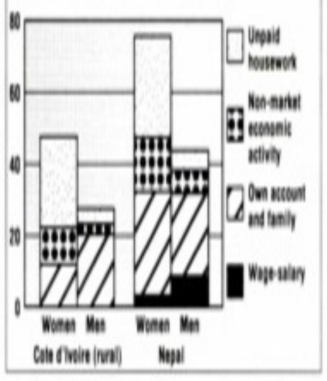
TIME

● Women work as much or more than men everywhere in the world – as much as 13 hours a week more in Africa and Asia.

● In developing countries very poor women are now working 60-90 hours a week just to maintain the meagre living standards of a decade ago.

● Before 1975 women and men in Western Europe worked (paid and unpaid) similar hours. Now women work 5-6 hours more than men per week. In Eastern Europe they work 7 hours more than men.

TIME SPENT IN WORK (HOURS PER WEEK)



● Only in North America and Australia do women work (paid and unpaid) the same number of hours as men. Shopping is more evenly shared but women still do 75 per cent of household chores.

MONEY

● The value of women's unpaid housework as a percentage of GDP is estimated at 23 per cent in the US and 33 per cent in India.

● When women do the same work as men they get paid 30-40 per cent less pay on average worldwide. In Canada women professionals still earn 15-20 per cent less than their male counterparts.

● Although women's participation in the informal sector is increasing returns are decreasing, and there is a bigger gap in earning between women and men than in the formal sector.

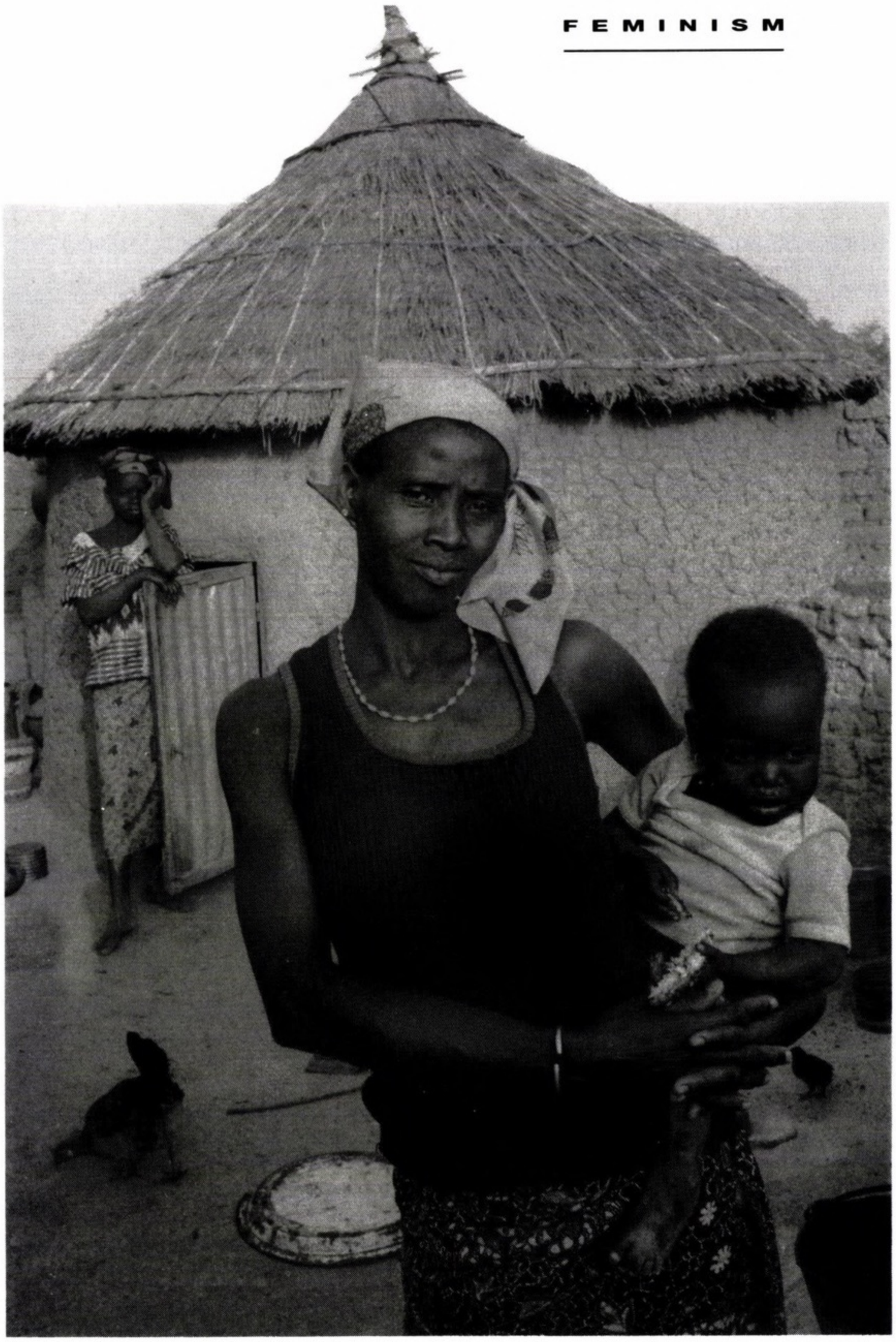
POSITION

● Officially measured, 41 per cent of the world's women are economically active. Another 10-20 per cent are economically productive but not counted because of inadequate measurement.

● Women hold 10-20 per cent of managerial and administrative jobs worldwide and less than 20 per cent of manufacturing jobs. Of the top 1,000 US corporations only two are headed by women.

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

ALL FIGURES TAKEN FROM THE WORLD'S WOMEN 1970-1990: TRENDS AND STATISTICS (UNITED NATIONS, 1991).



MARK EDWARDS/STILL PICTURES

Now, **listen** to **me!**

'Women' is a buzz word in development circles. So why are so many African women still so poor? ***Wanjiru Kihoro*** *gives an inside view.*

THEY were shocked. We were looking at summaries of the agency's projects in Africa. But here was I, an African woman on the grants committee of a British aid agency, suggesting that we scrap a paragraph that dealt with 'gender implications'.

My colleagues protested. The paragraph was very important, they said. At least it forced project officers to consider the role of women. I argued that in most cases it was quite clear that the projects officers had not paid any serious attention to gender issues. So why pretend?

Many of the projects were described as having women participants – but the question of what kind of participation was never addressed. Neither was the question of control and decision making.

Foreign aid agencies are seen to be playing a vital role in meeting the basic needs of underprivileged women, especially those in rural areas. But if planners do not see what the women are already doing in their societies the projects will fail. Let me give you a classic example that happened in the Gambia during the mid 1980s.

It was a rice production project, funded by an array of international agencies and charities. The planners automatically assumed that the households were headed by men – either husbands or fathers who managed the resources on behalf of other members. They also assumed that the rice-growers were men. Credits and inputs were offered to men – who took them. No-one took the trouble to find out that it was actually the women who traditionally grew the rice for domestic consumption and who exchanged the surplus.

Worse still, the scheme was going to develop irrigated rice production on common lands to which women had secured use rights. With the support of project and government officials men established exclusive rights to these common lands, pushing women onto inferior plots to continue cultivating traditional rice varieties. The women had to negotiate everything through their husbands. When finally they were expected to provide labour for free on their husbands' plots the women refused and demanded to be paid in full. The project was a fiasco.

This example shows the weight Western development planners have given to cash crop production (controlled by men) over subsistence farming (done by women). The principle economic activity in Africa is subsistence agriculture done by women – so why did the planners not invest development aid in this area, which would also relieve hunger?

They should know better by now. Already back in the mid-1970s women had been 'discovered' by development planners – who simultaneously discovered that aid programmes had failed to eradicate poverty. Since then much lip service has been paid to the equal participation of women in development. The easy solution was to 'integrate' women into existing develop-

ment models. There followed numerous income-generating handicrafts and nutrition education projects for women, some of which brought short-term help to a few people. But in most cases the 'double burden' of work already carried out by women was ignored. So was the low status of women which limits women's access to land, credit, machinery, markets for their products and control over any income raised.

Even after the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) highlighted and publicized the important – but previously unacknowledged – role of women in economic and social development this blind spot covering the role of African women remains.

Colonialism is largely to blame. It established a capitalist economy, created urban migration and left women to carry their own workload in addition to that of the departed men in the rural areas. The perceived inferiority of women to men – which existed in most pre-colonial African societies – was reinforced by the colonists and their religions.

National independence brought changes – but still no recognition of the central role played by women. For example, issues of women and development in most African countries are still dealt with by a Ministry of Culture and Social Development which is also responsible for youth, sports, culture and destitutes. African women are still, it seems, regarded as objects of recreation (as in sports), or art (as in culture) or social liabilities (as with destitutes) rather than assets in the development process.

So what can be done to attain women's real and recognized participation in development? Feminism is crucial for it provides a consciousness and a commitment to change which are the sources of energy that can mobilize women. It may be an emotive word in Africa but feminism is not a new or foreign concept to us. It was not imposed on us by the United Nations or by Western feminists, but has an independent history. As feminists from WIN (Women in Nigeria) have observed: 'One of the most recurrent charges made to and about Third World women is that of being blind copy cats of Western European feminists'. This is 'a divide-and-rule tactic', a 'ploy created and maintained to confuse women, to bind them to their respective men and male systems and to prevent a dangerous comparing of notes and political unity', they conclude.

In so far as they are involved in the struggle for women's rights, African women are feminists. Opinions vary, of course. Strategies vary. Some believe that the battle to obtain equal rights with men within the existing status quo is enough. Men are seen as the enemy. Other feminists go further and ask: 'Has colonialism, neo-colonialism and development as we know it necessarily helped all African men?'

I believe it is unrealistic to expect any viable development to happen while the burden of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank conditions weighs so heavily on the daily lives of the poor, particularly women. The export-oriented policies required by the IMF may have increased women's participation in cash crop production, but at the price of devaluing and impoverishing women who are subsistence farmers.

Poor countries cannot afford to pay foreign debts. They must be cancelled. Nor can we afford unsuitable development models that marginalize women. What we need is to create strong social movements, involving both women and men, who are committed to popular participation, sexual equality, and redistribution of wealth.

There are examples of such organizations growing in Africa. The Organization of Rural Advancement and Progress (ORAP) in Zimbabwe, for example. Or grassroots groups like the Tanzanian Media Women's Organization (TAMWA) and Women in Nigeria (WIN).

Many African women now see no point in being 'integrated' into a mainstream Western-influenced development in which we have no say. Women are the group most harmed by the existing development strategies. So we will have to be the ones at the forefront in defining and creating a new self-reliant, people-centred development. ■

Wanjiru Kihoro is a Kenyan economist currently working at the Africa Centre in London.

Rokeya

IN 1976 I decided to give up being a university teacher in Dhaka and go to a village. I had never been to a village before. That's the way it is if you are a middle-class city dweller in Bangladesh.

Why the village? Because that is where most people live in Bangladesh. If you want to do something for the exploited majority you have to go to the village. And the most exploited of the most exploited are village women.

When I arrived I did a survey. At first the women would offer me a chair. But I would sit on the ground where they sat, explaining that like them I was wearing a nylon sari and it washed easily. They accepted that. We would discuss all sorts of things – ranging from the gender of God to how often their in-laws allowed them to visit their families. In some cases it was only once every three or four years. I began to realize how isolated the women were, working so hard in the house they rarely left it.

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

I said to them: 'Why don't you form a co-operative? All you need is 10 or 15 women. A small amount of capital on which we can raise a loan with which to do business.' I was adamant that they should not get into activities that kept them at home. They must get out and do work that men do. Petty trade, for example.

'But how can we sell our goods?', said the women. 'If we go to the market they will say we are of bad character.' I turned to the oldest woman there and said: 'If you go will they say that of you?' She laughed and said: 'No, not me!'. So we agreed that the old woman should go. She went – and then the others started going with her. No-one took any notice. The men in the market were too poor, too busy trying to survive to care.

But the powerful landowning family did. They warned me: leave the village or we will kill you. They described all the different kinds of guns they had at their disposal to kill me with. I replied saying: 'All you need is a good stick, properly wielded and that will kill me'. They left me alone after that...

Meanwhile the women were branching out into inter-district trade. They were very good at buying – and very good at travelling for free. Soon they were travelling all over Bangladesh. Their men might object at first – but they stopped when the money started coming in. And anyway at least a quarter of village women were on their own – divorced or abandoned by husbands who set up new families elsewhere.

But there were problems. One day a woman came up to me and said: 'What are we going to do about rape?'. Good question. We immediately called a meeting. Women travelling on their own, away from home at night, were getting raped. 'But why do men rape,' asked the women, 'when most of them are not able to even satisfy their own wives?' In the end we decided there was nothing we could do about rape – but we must not let it get in our way.

About wife beating we could do something, though. Whenever it happens in the villages now, the women go to the man's house and say: 'Why are you doing this? What has she done?'. There is nothing more intimidating for a wife-beater than to be confronted by 15 angry women!

There are now 300,000 of women in our organization. Sometimes we go to the cities to demonstrate against domestic violence or to show solidarity with women working in terrible conditions in textile factories. The village women love demonstrations. They have changed and are changing still. It's wonderful to see!

Rokeya Rahman Kabeer is the founder of Saptagram in Bangladesh. It receives funding from Oxfam.

Breaking points

It's dangerous for Afghan refugee women to talk, let alone write, about life under Islamic fundamentalism. But Zahra shared her experience with fiction writer ***Sarah Miles*** *– who now tells the story.*

ZAHRA shivered as she finished her morning prayer. The chill air reminded her of home in the mountains of Afghanistan and she was grateful that Pakistan's hot season had not yet begun.

She made tea in the yard and carried it to her husband who was hunched under his quilt listening to the radio.

'They shouldn't go – it's too dangerous,' he said sharply. Zahra's face betrayed nothing.

'The teachers won't close the school. We must support them by sending the girls,' she said quietly.

The day before their daughters, ten and eight years old, had returned home terrified. They had been accosted by three Afghan men who threatened to punch them and insisted that the girls' school for Afghan refugees was closed by order of a *fatwa* or religious edict.

The edict had been pasted on the street walls but the teachers and parents were determined to ignore it.

'That *fatwa* is the work of narrow-minded bigots,' Zahra continued, contemptuous of the fundamentalist Resistance leaders who had grown so powerful in exile. Their harking back to the Prophet's ideals was a sham and a travesty of Islam, motivated by vested interests.

Of course after the 1978 coup she had actively supported Resistance efforts to overthrow the communist regime. But now the Afghan Resistance was split into two factions: moderates and fundamentalists. Here in Peshawar, capital of Pakistan's north-west frontier province, the fundamentalists held sway – for they received the bulk of the foreign arms and money. To Zhara they had become the enemy.

'Those men are armed and dangerous,' her husband warned. 'They have already driven one headmistress out of the country.'

'But the school is still open,' Zahra insisted. 'Anyway Aisha, the headmistress, was sick. She had to go to America for treatment.'

'She went because she was afraid they would kill her,' he retorted.

Zahra knew he was right. Not that anyone could call Aisha a coward. She had done so much: defying those who opposed secular education for girls by opening the first girl's secondary school for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Eventually the fundamentalists broke her nerve. The irony of it: Aisha, tortured by the communists for her work in the Resistance, was finally thwarted by fellow Resistance fighters.

'Please give permission,' Zahra pleaded. 'It's a sin to deprive girls of education. Their brother will go with them – don't worry, they'll be safe.'

Her husband silently assented, twiddling the radio knob for better reception. He constantly listened to Radio Afghanistan and the BBC World Service. But what good did it do? The news was always bad. After so much fighting and bitterness how could peace ever come to Afghanistan now?

Subdued, the girls put on their long grey uniforms and white head veils. Their very outfits expressed the repressive form of Islam that Zahra despised. Watching her children leave, she offered a prayer for their protection.

* * *

Unlike the majority of Pakistan's three million Afghan refugees, Zahra's family did not live in a camp but rented two cramped rooms and a tiny yard in a poor section of the city where Afghans and Pakistanis lived side by side. As relative newcomers to Peshawar they were not eligible for refugee assistance.

Three years ago it had become too dangerous for them to stay in the Afghan capital, Kabul. Boys younger than Zahra's eldest son Samad were being snatched from the streets and taken as soldiers by the communists. Also her husband discovered that an enemy in the Ministry where he worked had proof that he was passing information to the Resistance. He was in danger of summary execution.

Within a week the family left everything and made the treacherous journey across the border, paying most of their savings to the guides who smuggled them out. Now their main income was 1,300 rupees: Zahra's monthly wage at a sewing project for Afghan women. Her husband became a street-trader .

Zahra had been brought up in a liberal household. After passing twelfth grade at school she got a job at the national airline office, dealing with customers. But now in Peshawar she had to observe strict *purdah* and wear a full-length veil in public, which she hated.

Today she dressed her smallest son, Nassir, put on her black gauze face-covering and wrapped herself in her black veil. Only her shabby patent leather shoes and the hem of her trousers showed beneath its voluminous folds.

She and the child hurried through crowds, choking dust and petrol fumes, and caught the minibus to work.

Once Nassir was in the creche, she went straight to the cutting room where she and five other women ran an embroidery project for outworkers in the refugee camps. The others listened horror-struck as Zahra told them how the girls had been threatened.

ILLUSTRATION: CLAUDIA SCHMID

'Those bastards stop at nothing,' muttered her colleague Nasrat, who also had a daughter at the school.

'Some teachers change their clothes when they arrive at school these days – as disguise,' said Fatma, the project leader. The teachers were renowned for their courage. 'Don't worry, Zahra,' she added, 'the girls will be safe. You did right to send them.'

'I wouldn't have sent them if I didn't believe that!' Zahra commented with a slightly hostile look. 'But their father was unwilling at first.'

'Of course – mothers care more than fathers about educating girls,' murmured Nasrat.

Resolutely Zahra pushed the issue to the back of her mind. There was work to be done. She and Nasrat must visit out-workers, collect embroidery and place further orders. They caught a bus to Chenar Refugee Camp, where most of the permanent inhabitants were women, children and old men who depended on refugee rations.

The two women plunged down a dirt track alley into the camp, past crowded tea-houses, stalls and barrows of tangerines and blackening bananas. Nasrat lifted a dirty hessian curtain and led the way into the first dwelling.

Inside the yard a woman was washing clothes. The ground was muddy and water drained away through a hole in the wall. Zahra doubted whether the girls hanging out wet garments had ever had an education apart from some rudimentary religious instruction.

'It cost me a lot of effort,' the woman commented as Zahra examined her embroidery. 'In fact it's hardly worth my while unless you pay me more.'

'Do you want another order or not?' Nasrat demanded brusquely.

'What else can I do?' the woman sighed. 'My husband's been fighting inside Afghanistan for months. I'm sick with worry; my children are hungry.'

She tucked the 150 rupees carefully away. It was poor reward for so many hours painstaking labour. Zahra wished there were more opportunities for such women to earn money – but they were trapped at home, conditioned into a state of virtual imprisonment.

Village women used to be so different in old Afghanistan. They had active lives, fetching water, gathering wood, spinning wool in the sun. And the parties! Drumming, clapping and dancing, story-telling and drinking tea until the early hours of the morning. Now everything was bombed and destroyed and the land was strewn with mines. So much depression, so little hope.

* * *

Zahra was exhausted by the time she got home. The house was uncannily quiet. One look at her son Samad's face and her heart began beating. Where were her daughters?

'Six men with guns went to the girls school!' he blurted out wide-eyed. 'They shot the porter. There was blood all over the floor...'

'Where are the girls?'

'Mother of Latif's house. They were crying, so I took them there.'

Mother of Latif lived close by. Zahra was about to rush out.

'Wait, mother,' Samad checked her. 'Father's invited five guests tonight. He told me to buy meat and fruit. What shall I do?'

Zahra put her head in her hands. She couldn't think. She wanted her daughters. The guests would soon be here.

'Samad, fetch the girls,' she ordered, trying to appear calm. 'I need them to help me. Take Nassir with you – and tell Mother of Latif I must talk to her.'

Her hands shook as she measured rice onto a tray. What had the girls seen? She remembered turmoil on the streets of Kabul; school-girls demonstrating against the communist government were machine-gunned down. Blood all over the black and white uniforms. Screams filling the sky. She imagined her own daughters beaten and crushed. She felt sick. How could she dream of sacrificing their lives for a principle? Yet how could she condemn them to drudgery in a sunless yard like the women in the camp? Closed eyes – that's what the fundamentalists wanted. Closed eyes and blank brains. Women muzzled so that those bigots had more power to themselves.

Tears fell onto the rice as she sifted through it for husks and stones. Forcing herself to slow down, concentrate, she tried to form some plans. Tomorrow she would miss work and take the girls herself, she decided. She imagined herself physically shielding them, her flesh flinching from bullets.

She strained to hear their voices but they didn't come. Uncontrollable images invaded her consciousness: Aisha, the brave headmistress whose fingernails were forever blackened and split by electric needles. In Kabul she withheld information under torture. But there was a breaking point – that was the horror. The fundamentalists had broken her.

Faint with anxiety, Zahra rinsed the rice. The cold water shocked her senses, just as she felt her strength draining away. Automatically the holy names of God came to her lips. Her breathing slowed. 'Oh God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, this is not my breaking point,' she breathed. 'Help me. This is my battle.' ■

Sarah Miles is a British writer who has worked extensively with Afghan refugees.

Simply ... a history of feminism

The term 'feminism' may belong to modern times – but the roots of feminism go back much further.

1 Rebels and thinkers

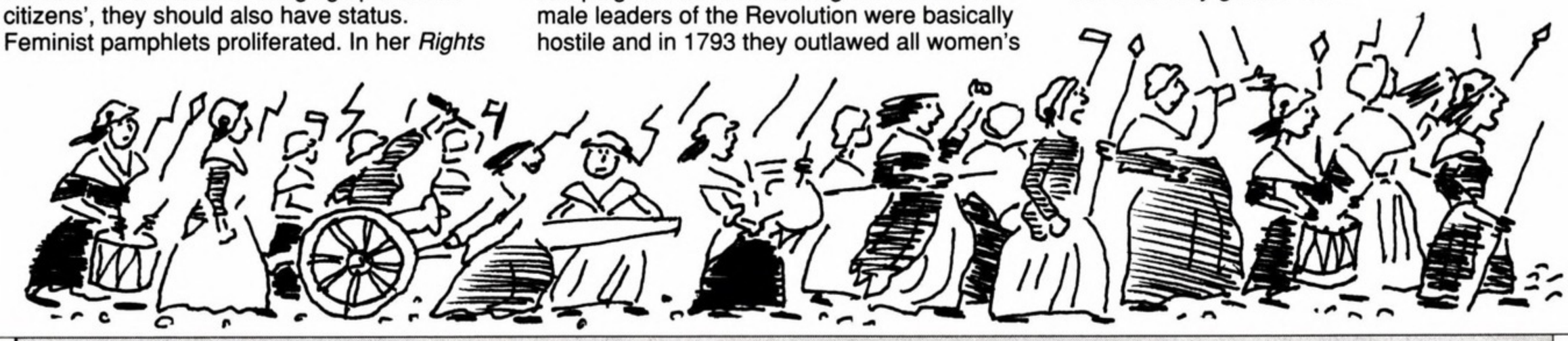
There have always been independent feminists. In sixth century BC Greece, Sappho wrote lesbian poetry and ran a girls' school. The fifteenth century French writer Christine de Pisan is now regarded as a feminist thinker. In the seventeenth century English adventurer and political activist Aphra Benn was getting embroiled in the West Indian slave rebellion – and writing 13 novels. The radical way in which some men were thinking during the Age of Reason incidentally changed attitudes towards women. Thinkers like Newton, Locke, Voltaire and Diderot believed that science and reason could explain the world. They began to analyse women in terms of what they deemed 'natural' rather than what was divinely ordained. This was not necessarily better for women.

3 Radical sparks

Meanwhile, in North America, women took part in the independence struggle and exercised their power as consumers to boycott British goods. Even in Britain there was a rash of radical – and reactionary – writing about women. Closely watching events in France was British journalist and translator Mary Wollstonecraft. She worked to support her family but in 1787 came to London to live by her writing. She joined a radical circle of intellectuals. A year after Thomas Paine wrote *The Rights of Man* (1791) Mary Wollstonecraft produced her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. It was the first full-scale book favouring women's liberation and was widely read. She was dismissed by the male conservative press as 'a strumpet'.

2 Mothers of the revolution

Women played a major role in the 1789 French Revolution and the ideal of 'Republican Motherhood' took shape. But, some argued, if women had the task of 'bringing up the new citizens', they should also have status. Feminist pamphlets proliferated. In her *Rights of Woman,* Olympe de Gourges wrote: 'Woman is born free and her rights are the same as those of man... if women have the right to go to the scaffold, they must also have the right to go to Parliament.' Parisian women formed political clubs and associations to campaign on issues affecting them. But the male leaders of the Revolution were basically hostile and in 1793 they outlawed all women's clubs. A woman's place was in the home, they ruled. This hostility persisted through the nineteenth century. The Napoleonic Code gave all management of family funds to the husband. Not until 1909 did French women have control over their own earnings. Not until 1944 did they get the vote.



CARTOONS: ANGELA MARTIN

4 Missions and manacles

For black women living in slavery in America the late eighteenth century was a turning point, as Protestant evangelism combined with the anti-slavery movement. Women made up a large part of revival congregations – both in white and black churches. Women were not supposed to preach but some – like the former slave Jarena Lee – ignored this. Black women realized that freedom from whites was not enough. They had to have freedom from men too. But uniting white and black women was not easy. When black feminist, Sojourner Truth, stood before the Second Annual Convention of Women's Rights in Akron Ohio in 1852 white racist women tried to stop her speaking. There were many black women activists but Sojourner Truth was the most outspoken, arguing publicly that black women should have the vote.

5 Industry and protest

During the Industrial Revolution unmarried women were leaving home to work in the cities, often for low wages in appalling factory conditions. Meanwhile the idea of female education became firmly entrenched and middle class women were demanding access to a much wider range of occupations. On both sides of the Atlantic women started taking part in industrial action. During the 1808 Weavers Strike in Britain *The Times* singled out striking women weavers as 'more turbulent and insolent' than the men. In the US the first all-women strike took place in 1828 at Cocheco Mill, New Hampshire. In Britain in 1854 Barbara Leigh Smith drew together for the first time a group of women who called themselves feminists and campaigned to change laws. A strike by women in an East London match factory helped create the British trade union movement.

6 Invasion and rebellion

In Asia and Africa women were resisting both traditional and colonial oppression. Chinese feminists who joined the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864 called for an end to foot-binding and demanded communal ownership of property and equal rights for women and men. Colonizing Europeans made alliances with groups that were the most conservative and often most oppressive of women. So the British in India encouraged the dowry system, arranged marriages and education for men only. But by 1905 Indian women were participating in the Swadeshi movement to boycott foreign goods and in 1917 the Women's Indian Association was set up with links to the British movement for women's suffrage. In parts of Africa women were banned from entering the cities and their traditional access to land – as Africa's principle farmers – was also denied. But in 1923 the Egyptian Women's Federation was formed and in 1924 it got the age of marriage for girls raised to 16.

7 Suffering for suffrage

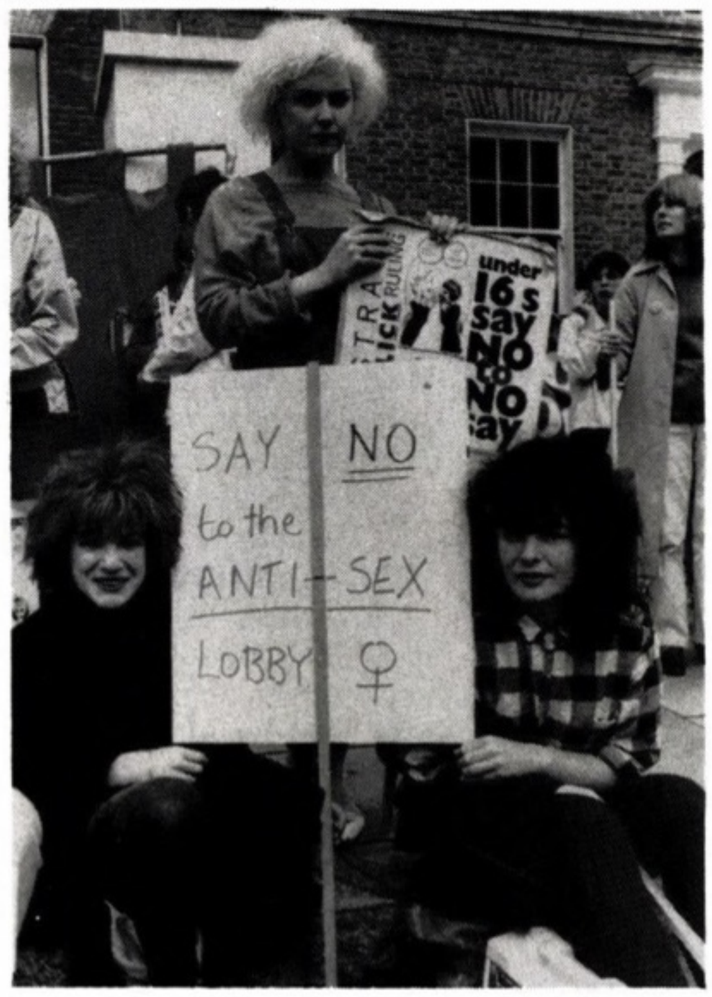
Women's call for the vote was echoing around the world. It was first answered in Aotearoa/ New Zealand in 1893. In Britain mass meetings organized by Emmeline Pankhurst and her two daughters Sylvia and Christabel drew crowds of up to 500,000. Determined militants chained themselves to railings and caused civil disturbances. In 1908 the Pankhursts were arrested and imprisoned. They went on hunger strike and were force-fed – causing public outcry. But only in 1918 did women (over the age of 30) get the vote in Britain. The US followed in 1920. In India Provincial Assemblies were allowed to enfranchise women in 1919. And in 1931 the Indian National Congress Party pledged itself to sexual as well as caste and religious equality in independence. The first Latin American country to give women the vote was Ecuador in 1929, followed by Brazil, Argentina, Cuba and Chile during the 1930s.

8 Reds and beds

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels saw women's liberation as part of the socialist revolution and Rosa Luxembourg, Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollantai became respected political leaders. In 1918 the first Women's Conference was held in Moscow and during the 1920s – under Lenin – the Soviet Government promoted equal rights. Marriage, divorce and contraception were made simple. But in the 1930s and 1940s Stalin turned the clock back. Divorce was made difficult, abortion banned, contraception restricted. In China the 1949 Revolution brought formal equality for women and men. But both here and in the USSR women did the housework as well as their jobs. In the West feminism lay dormant. Radicals were preoccupied with fighting unemployment, fascism, then McCarthyism.

9 The Second Wave

But during the 1960s feminism burst into life again in the US as part of a radical culture that included Civil Rights and sexual liberation. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was a bestseller in 1963. Feminist groups campaigned on issues such as childcare, health, welfare, education, abortion. Consciousness-raising groups proliferated. In Europe, Canada and Australasia too, new ideas and laws were changing society. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* was an eye-opener. And in 1975 the United Nations announced an International Decade for Women. Revolutionary movements in Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua were including women's liberation in their ideology. In Europe the peace movement became the focus for feminist activism – especially at the US air base at Greenham Common, UK. And feminism boomed in Latin America after the restoration of democracy during the 1980s.



PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): LEONARD FREED/MAGNUM; PAM ISHERWOOD/FORMAT; JENNY MATTHEWS/FORMAT.

And the beat goes on, from the 1960s to 1990s; from a Women's Liberation demo to a Lesbian Strength March and the sex-under-16 lobby.

Don't wanna be like you

The mother's a feminist. So is the daughter. But do they see eye-to-eye? A spirited dialogue by ***Juliet Kellner****.*

'Now don't get me wrong, Mother,' said my daughter who, at 16, had reached an age not notable for tact, 'but what I really dread is growing up to be like you.' You may imagine this was said in a heated moment, but not at all: if anything, we were particularly friendly at the time.

'What exactly is the problem with becoming like me?' I asked cautiously.

'You're such a doormat,' she said.

'I'm not a doormat! I'm a Manager…'

'Well, you're not as bad as you used to be,' she agreed. 'But really you're doing just the same thing you did before – only picking up the pieces at the office instead of at home. No, as well as at home.'

'Well, that's the Manager's job…'

'It's a Mother's job! You call it "being the manager", but what do you actually do?'

'Well, I organize things: sort out the paperwork and scheduling, see to the staff.'

'Exactly! You still run the household, only now it's an "officehold". Meanwhile the men in the company go out into the world, getting all the glory.'

'Well, it is true that the men tend to have the foreground jobs. It's only because their names are better known in the field.'

'But why are they better known? They're not any cleverer than you.'

'They haven't taken five years off the career ladder to have children, or worked at part-time jobs for ten years after that.'

'I see. That's a great excuse. They haven't spent years playing Mother at home, so they can get out of doing the Mother jobs at the office and become even more famous.'

'Actually it does remind me a bit of when I used to pack you up a sandwich and a chocolate biscuit in your tuck-box and march you off bravely to playgroup. Now I send the men off to conferences, their

briefcases neatly filled up with papers...'

'Well, I'm going to get myself a job right out front. On stage, in the spotlight. I'm not going to do the make-up backstage for someone else.'

'Being the power behind the throne isn't so bad.'

'But you're hiding behind the throne. Probably dusting the back.'

'I'm afraid of being in the limelight, you're right there. So it's good if your generation isn't afraid of it and takes it for granted that you are entitled to be out front just as much as the men.'

'I want to be... wise and knowledgeable. I'm going to read everything, and travel as much as I can. I don't want to be like you, half-furious and half-apologetic, all confused about whether it's all right to come out shining.'

'Hang on! My generation is bound to be fairly confused. We were brought up to be discreet and modest – and then we realized, in a great flood of rage, how we were being exploited. But part of us is still caught up in the old pattern, still brainwashed, feeling nervous about showing our power. So we're bound to swing back and forth from defiance to self-doubt. Until we find ourselves.'

'Maybe our lot will do the finding.'

'Could be. But you should be grateful, not snooty. Our generation went through all that painful, difficult change, a real revolution in thinking. Like pushing a huge locomotive over. Even if we only managed to push it half over we made it much easier for you lot to push it over the rest of the way. You don't have to carry the weight of centuries of inertia – of institutionalized unfairness to women.'

'But now you know all this, why can't you get free too?'

'I suppose... in my case it's partly that I'm afraid that if I am a success, other women will hate me.'

'They probably will. Especially your feminist friends – your Wednesday women's group. They really love moaning about how they've all been crushed by men, don't they? They see a woman who succeeds as being a sort of traitor. It's fine as long as you're all in the same boat together, all miserable. But if one of you got out, and up – then the others would punish you. I've seen that woman at the office sabotaging you because you're at the top. She actually does you more damage than any of the men.'

'You're... sharp-sighted.'

'My friend Suzanne says she doesn't want to be one of the Soggy Sisterhood crying over the ironing. She's going to be a barrister, earn $70,000 a year. She doesn't care if other women are jealous. She hates women's groups. She doesn't believe in being ideological.'

'She doesn't believe in being ideological... hmmm. That's an interesting little contradiction. And your friend Suzanne will get to being a lawyer without ever going to school, will she?'

'Of course she went to school.'

'I rest my case, M'Lud (or should it be M'Lady?). Suzanne can only get to be a lawyer because women who were feminists fought for girls to go to school, and go to University, and break into the legal system.

Louise

APART from the Saturday night disco in the Church Hall there was **nothing** to do in Wishaw, the small Scottish town where I grew up. The last number was always a slow dance and if you hadn't got off with someone by that time, you got out fast. The boys had names like 'Shug' or 'Rusty'. The girls were just called slags or lezzies. There was no in-between status. Sexual contact was furtive, unpleasant and sometimes painful. Saying 'No' wasn't tolerated. It was why you were there so what! You passively serviced.

Until I met Elaine! Together we could resist, we could be bad. We determined to use the boys, harder and faster than they could use us. We called this 'sexual liberation'. We wanted to be equal, so we tried to treat them equally badly. Show **no** feeling, pick them up and leave them. We became the dreaded nymphos. The logic was irresistible.

My next strategy was to move as far away as possible. Why did I choose York University? I didn't look right, I didn't sound right. I wasn't allowed to forget it either. I imagined that University would liberate me, but I was greeted with a new sort of diminishment. My sense of self seriously faltered. Reading seminar papers induced a panic I had never before experienced. It wasn't just my voice, my accent that were being ignored, but an experience of a culture different to the one being celebrated around me.

For the first time in my life I met 'feminists'. I felt that we had nothing in common, that their histories somehow made it possible for them to be feminist but that mine couldn't. Feminism could never be applied to life in Wishaw. I agreed with almost all they said and yet... I wouldn't call myself a feminist. Men were the winners. I thought being a feminist would make me one of the losers.

After graduating I aimlessly traipsed down to London. I was at my lowest ebb: expectations nil, commitment of any kind unthinkable. With my 'symbols of resistance' – encompassing everything from my hair and clothes to my subterranean lifestyle – I edged myself into the corners of employment where I would have least effect, bemoaned my sorry lot and retired to bed satisfied that I was being ignored. For the next few years I separated myself from the world I wanted to change. Instead of shouting

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

aloud and making demands, I was sullen and incoherent.

I was clear about certain things, though. That women were different **and** equal. That the problem was that men had the power and women didn't. I wouldn't, however, address the difficult issue of why I still chose to have sex with men. My attempts at sexually treating men as men treated women had repeatedly failed. Conducting a personal campaign against sexual inequality seemed hopeless. I finally realized it was time to go public.

I got active with the Campaign Against Pornography. Frankly I wasn't up to much with the campaign strategies. I saw my role as entertainer for those doing the real work. I watched a lot of television and so I became CAP's media monitor. This felt safe.

One Friday night I caught the *James Whale Radio Show*. This man loves to humiliate women. It's his joy and pleasure. I immediately contacted CAP. 'I've been monitoring the media. Call *Right to Reply*.' 'OK, Louise, do it!' What, me? Excuse me, nobody said anything about Media Participation, only monitoring. Oh God!

I phoned *Right to Reply*. They were interested. Worse still they were trying to persuade the producer of the programme to appear in the studio with *me*. I prayed that they would fail. They would regret putting me through this pain. I would cry on television and then they would be sorry.

Going on TV meant that I was going to have speak out loud, in front of thousands of people. For the first time I **had** to find the will to say something, to find a voice for the women who had switched off the television, hurt and humiliated.

I was joined by a woman from the Child Abuse Studies Unit for the studio discussion. I remember thinking, 'I can just leave. I won't die, just because I get up and leave.' The programme was 'as live'. I wasn't. I can't remember anything else.

The next day I watched *Right to Reply*. The Executive Producer, our enemy, was dreadful. We were good! I had won something for other women – and for me. The issues suddenly seemed in focus, because they were being defined by women in the plural – and not just me in the singular.

Louise Donald now works at the London School of Contemporary Dance. Pieces by her and other young British women appear in *Surviving the Blues*, ed. Joan Scanlon (Virago, 1991)

These aren't opportunities she acquired through some Act of God, you know.'

'Acts of Goddesses?'

'You can laugh. But if she takes these things for granted and doesn't keep fighting to maintain them, her daughters might not get to have the chances she's had. And even under the best circumstances, only a tiny minority of girls will get to become lawyers earning $70,000 a year. Even your darling Suzanne may find it's a little trickier to get into the judicial system than she thinks: she may be very glad of the other women keeping up the pressure to make the Bar less hideously chauvinist.'

'Okay. But your women's group won't help, when they love being such victims.'

'You don't understand how crucial it has been for women to get together. When we were isolated it was very easy for other people to make us feel we were just mad or bad. It was only when we started to talk together that we saw there was a pattern of injustice, it wasn't just us being 'demanding' or 'unreasonable' as individuals. Did you know that a lot of my friends' husbands wouldn't allow their wives to work?'

'Whaaat!? Who did they think they were to give permission?'

'Like I said: times have changed. Massively – in less than twenty years. And those of us who did work in those days were always justifying working in terms of 'having to', or pretending it was just a little hobby, to earn 'pin money'. Not real money, which was what The Man earned.'

'Just a toy job.'

'To keep the Little Woman's fingers out of mischief. Sickening, isn't it? But that's how we were brought up. To pamper male egos. Not to threaten them in any way – poor little delicate blobs. We were meant to smile a discretely superior smile amongst ourselves, tilt our heads and sigh and say wisely indulgent things like: "All men are really just little boys at heart".'

'Yuk!'

'Quite. We were meant to think we were so clever, manipulating men with our womanly wiles. It was feminism that showed us what a pathetic delusion all this was. We had lost everything important, our self-respect, our sense of adulthood, to gain... what? Objects, usually.'

'"Oh sweetie-piekins, if only I had a washing machine I could wash your shirts even whiter". It's like American Indians being given coloured trinkets while being robbed of their land.'

'Feminism showed us it was all right for women to get serious about our lives. And to be more honest. I went through a lot of flak about being a bad mother for going to work – when you were five, for heaven's sake.'

'You! But you're obsessed with mothering. I can't stand it sometimes...'

'But mothering was the only thing a good woman could do in those days. Anything else was suspect. We certainly couldn't have been unapologetically childless – or cheerfully lesbian, like in young women's magazines these days. I remember a friend telling the rest of us about this mysterious tribe of women called Lisbons. That's how clueless we were when we were your age, and how much choice we had about sex, or having babies.'

'Didn't the men get fed up with all this womanly wiles junk? I'd feel insulted.'

'They thought they were supposed to like it, though at some less conscious level they must have resented being simpered at dishonestly. It's a mockery of real femininity, all this fluttering eyelashes rubbish.'

'Oh, talking of eyelashes, did you see the false ones I bought yesterday?'

'False eyelashes! You criticize me for not being a good enough feminist...'

'Well, that's something I really don't agree with, having to dress in an old sack to be a real woman.'

'You're not into power-dressing as well?'

'No. I want to look... well, like a wise, strong, beautiful woman. Not a bimbo, or a non-woman in a suit or a sack.'

'But beauty is so commercialized.'

'So? Just because it's been commercialized that doesn't make beauty itself bad, does it? Like Christianity isn't bad because Christmas has become commercialized.'

'So your generation is going to redeem Beauty for women, is it, as well as Freedom and Power?'

'Perhaps,' she said. 'But I can't go on reconstructing your life right now – I'm meeting friends at seven. You'll just have to decide what you want from life. By the way, where did you put my coat that you collected from the cleaners – and did you manage to buy me some more tights?' ■

Juliet Kellner is a UK-based film-maker.

Inheriting feminism ... and the Suffragist hat fits.

MING DE NASTY/POSEURS

ACTION

There are thousands of women's groups and organizations around the world. Here are a few starting points.

AOTEAROA Affirmative Action, PO Box 12361, Wellington. **Federation of Women's Health Councils**, CPO Box 853, Auckland. **Women's Electoral Lobby**, PO Box 11 285, Wellington. **National Collective for Independent Women's Refuges**, Box 6386, Wellington. **Women Against Pornography**, 50 Courtney Place, PO Box 475, Wellington. **National Women's Committee**, NZ Council of Trade Unions, Box 6645, Wellington.

AUSTRALIA Women's Action Alliance, PO Box C23, Clarence St, Sydney, NSW 2000 Tel: (2) 875 1624. **Women's Liberation Movement Centre**, 6 May St, Hindmarsh SA 5007. **Women's Advisory Council**, 4 Campbell St Haymarket, NSW, 2000 Tel: (2) 561 8737. **National Foundation of Australian Women**, PO Box 1465, Canberra City, ACT, 2601 Tel: (6) 247 2276. **Women's Bureau**, Benjamin Offices, Belconnen, ACT 2615 Tel: (62) 644528.

CANADA National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 57 Mobile Drive, Toronto Tel: (406) 759 5252. **National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women**, 251 Bank St., Ste 506, Ottawa, Ont. KZP 1X3 Tel: (613) 232 0689. **Media Watch**, 517 Wellington St W, Ste 204, Toronto, Ont M5V1G1 Tel: (416) 408 2065. **Canadian Abortion Rights Action League**, 344 Bloor St W, Ste 306, Toronto, Ont M55 3A7. Tel: (416) 961 5771. **Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association**, 323 Chapel St, Ottawa, Ont KIN 7Z2 Tel: (613) 594 3196.

INTERNATIONAL ISIS-WICCE, 3 Chemin des Campanules, CH-1219 Aire, Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: (22) 796 44 37. **ISIS International** (Santiago) Casilla 2067, Correo, Santiago, Chile. **Dawn (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)** Rua Paulino Fernandes, 32, Rio de Janeiro 22270, Botafogo, Brazil Tel: (21) 246 1830. **Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women**, PO Box SM 366, Manila, Philippines. **Women Living Under Muslim Laws**, International Solidarity Network, Boite Postale 23, 34790 Grabels, Montpellier, France. **The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**, 304 East 45th St., 1106 New York, NY 10017 Tel: (202) 906 6453.

UK Change International, PO Box 824, London SE 24 9JX Tel: (71) 277 6187. **Southall Black Sisters** and **Women Against Fundamentalism**, BM Box 2706, London WC1 3XX Tel: (81) 571 9595. **National Women's Network for International Solidarity**, Box 110, 190 Upper Street, London N1 1RQ. **Rights of Women**, 52-57 Featherstone St, London EC1, Tel: (71) 251 6577. **Women's Health Information Centre** (address as above) Tel: (71) 251 6580. **Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre** (address as above) Tel: (71) 251 6332. **Wages for Housework Campaign**, 71 Tonbridge Street, London WCIH 9DZ Tel: (71) 837 7509. **Women Against Rape** (address as above) Tel: (71) 837 7509. **Women's Environmental Network**, Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA. **300 Group**, 9 Poland Street, London WIV 3DG, (71) 734 3457.

US National Organization of Women, 1000 16th St NW, Ste 700, Washington DC 20036. **National Coalition Against Sexual Assault**, 2428 Ontario Rd, NW, Washington DC. **National Women's Health Network**, 1325 6th St NW, Washington DC, 20005. **Women's Legal Defence and Education Fund**, 99 Hudson St, New York, NY 10031.

ROGER KOSE

Iron men gather in the wild. Taking photos is rarely permitted.

New Age **Patriarchs**

Feminism helped mould the 'new man'. But the latest brand of new man has little truck with feminism. ***Erica Simmons*** *investigates.*

BEHOLD the newest of the new men. You might have seen him on television, adorned with a mask of body paint, dancing around a campfire, entering a sweatlodge, shouting out his grief and anger from some pleasant location in the North American countryside.

Under the tutelage of Minnesota poet Robert Bly and guided by his bestselling book *Iron John*, thousands of American men are gathering to forge a new masculine identity.

The tools for this reappraisal include poetry, mythology, fairy tales, mask-making, drumming and sweatlodges – the traditional native Indian version of the sauna. Believers call the movement 'mythopoetic'; the historically minded observe that it borrows heavily from Jungian psychology.

Bly has diagnozed the psychic wounds of contemporary American men. They are afflicted with inexpressible feelings of grief and are emotionally repressed and socially isolated from one another. They are nice guys who are adept at meeting the needs of women and submerging their own. They have abandoned the old macho version of manhood, but lack a suitable new model of masculinity. They are what Bly calls 'soft men'.

But women and the women's movement are not to blame, Bly stresses. In fact feminism and the change it has wrought in gender relations are peripheral. The problem with most men, he argues, is that they lacked genuine fathering. Women have been left with the job of raising their sons and these boys have been tamed in their mother's image. 'Eventually a man needs to throw off all the indoctrination and discover for himself what the father is and what masculinity is.'

To assist with this process of self-discovery, Bly and his colleagues run workshops and retreats – sometimes a week long – in different sites around the country. Doug von Koss, Prop Master at the San Francisco Opera, works at some of these events. He asks men to identify scars on their bodies and to explain how each scar was received. 'Each scar represents a place where the body has been invaded,' says von Koss. 'It is a story, a doorway. I ask: "What did this to you? Was it a knife, a gun, a piece of glass? Who did it? Your father, your friend, another man?"' In a gesture of respect, red ribbons are tied around the scars. Correspondingly, there's a section in *Iron John* titled 'The Wound as Male Womb'.

But at the centre of Bly's mythology is the story of Iron John, which comes from the Brothers Grimm. It is about a boy prince whose ball rolls into the cage where a hairy, primitive-looking 'Wild Man' is confined. In order to retrieve the ball the boy agrees to set the Wild Man free by fetching the key from its hiding place under the Queen's pillow. The boy then flees to the forest with the Wild Man, whose name is Iron John. After learning self-discipline through a series of initiatory challenges the boy becomes a confident and successful adult.

Bly wrings endless significance out of this story. The Wild Man represents the suppressed and most valuable side of the

male character. Those who come to Bly want to free their own Wild Man. They must do this despite the resistance of women and the apathy or the hostility of other men.

What exactly is Bly's vision of the ideal, well adjusted man? Even those who admire his work are uncertain. When pushed they say things like: 'I'm still learning about this' or 'I'm still working on it'. But searching through Iron John's tangle of mythological references and bizarre historical analysis one can draw up some kind of short-list of recommended characteristics. The man who is 'in touch' with his Wild Man or 'inner tradition' will exhibit child-like spontaneity. He will show responsiveness toward the natural world, will demonstrate 'the positive side of male sexuality' and will 'fight cleanly with women' – that is, without physical violence. He will be disciplined in the pursuit of his desires; will experience a full range of spiritual and emotional states; will 'honour grief' and show 'respect for riskiness'. Finally, he will have his inner 'male and female principles' operating in 'partnership'.

Such a man, Bly suggests, will have less trouble coping with women – any woman would be pleased and even grateful to deal with a man so profoundly 'in touch' with himself. After all, this is a man whose 'instincts have not been so suppressed as to produce the rage that humiliates women'.

The emphasis of men's events is on creating a 'safe' environment where men are less fearful of self-revelation. 'Men are a dangerous people,' says Jim Richardson, a Vancouver activist with the Island Men Network. 'It's very scary to go to a men's group. But we're not going to get a real sense of masculinity by talking to women. Men need support from each other.'

Not everybody in the men's movement agrees. Ken Fisher, of the Ottawa-Hull Men's Forum Against Sexism complains that the mythopoetic approach offers 'a structure for pulling out of traditional masculinity into never-never land'. Bly's strength, says Fisher, lies in bolstering low male self-esteem in a time when 'there's no good news for men; no sense of power and élan'. But Fisher is suspicious of the New Age cast of the mythopoetic thought and argues that 'Bly guys are unconscious. They are looking for the short cut to nirvana. They want to go from confusion to a graceful existence beyond doubt.'

Fisher represents the anti-sexist branch of the men's movement which regards the status of women as inextricable from the question of masculinity – and he knows the dangers of avoiding this issue. He recalls what happened to one early men's group that he started. 'Within a year, five of us dumped our nagging feminist wives for pliable younger women on whom we could use our new sensitive skills.'

Like many profeminist critics Fisher says the men's movements should not focus on 'what aspects of masculinity to celebrate and perpetuate, but to what degree are we committed to dismantling and consciously pulling out of patriarchy'. He worries that Bly's movement is providing nothing more than 'our own little world' that 'gets us off the hook of nasty feminist demands' while offering 'no vision of how to bridge this great chasm of mistrust and despair' between the sexes.

Because the movement is still in its infancy and apolitical on principle, it may be slightly unfair to attack it on political grounds. Unlike the feminists who early on decided that 'the personal is political' these men are inward-looking. The agenda of the movement is a transformation of consciousness, not political change. But feminism has already laid the groundwork for examining gender issues in terms of power politics and so it seems reasonable to ask the men's movement to reply in kind.

Yet the mythopoetic movement appears almost culpably dismissive of political, especially feminist, thought – a complaint readily voiced from within the men's movement too. Meanwhile Bly is able to attract those men who may never have belonged to a support group, seen a therapist or thought much about feminist theory. The growing popularity of the movement suggests there is a need for something. The question for women is: how are these men going to behave when the weekend workshop is over? ■

Erica Simmons is a freelance writer based in Toronto.

Ray

At the age of 15 I joined the Royal Navy and became a submariner. I left to go into the probation service and started working with sex offenders. In 1984, I went to the US to profile serial killers and look at treatment for sex offenders. I became very unsure that I wanted to be a man any more. But I also became very sure that nobody else seemed to know what to do about sex offenders.

At this time women's groups were having important discussions on the interpretation of survival behaviour. Whatever the woman did during a rape attack the man interpreted that behaviour as validating and confirming his distorted thinking – not as a survival strategy. There were loads of examples of this, but men and the legal system did not take into consideration the power to get co-operation that an attacker has during a life-threatening situation.

ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM MCCURDY

I went to talk to rape survivor groups – with some unease. Why should they listen to a man talking about rape? But they were very supportive. I talked about my knowledge of sex offenders. About the deliberateness of offending. How it didn't just happen. How sex offenders groomed, how they targeted, how they selected their victims. And how the woman became depersonalized, a symbol.

In 1988 – with other like-minded people – I helped set up the Gracewell Clinic for the treatment of sex offenders. It's the first of its kind – and its ethos derives from feminism. It was women who brought the rape issue to the forefront. Feminism talked about how men actually abuse women, about how difficult it is to be a woman in society and not be abused; and about all the different levels of harassment. It was women who pushed child abuse and incest survival into the limelight too.

I think our treatment fails if it does not take on board what women are saying; if we do not challenge that deep desire in society to let men off the hook.

Apart from rape crisis groups I also exchanged information with anti-pornography campaigners. I do not think it is helpful to argue that pornography causes abuse, but in my work with offenders I kept seeing how pornography was used to validate and confirm their thinking.

It's been a strange journey for me – from a submariner to here. But I'm addicted to change. I think I have moved – therefore I think the offenders can move and change too. They are not stuck. And with the help of male colleagues I have been able to get over those negative feelings about being a man. The discussions, the emotions, the arm around each other, the working friendship: these did it.

But being with other groups of men I have to fight not to get sucked back into being a submariner. If you listen to men talking together they are incredibly abusive. This work makes you realize that abuse is *everywhere*. In the pub, the office...

Men who rape use anything to justify themselves, to blame the victim, to minimize, to normalize. And of course men will use the rise in feminism to justify what they do. But I'll fight it to every part of my being.

In the three years that Gracewell has been going no offender who has been treated here has been reconvicted. But we are just a rock pool; there is a bloody great ocean out there. And society prefers to build hospitals at the bottom of cliffs rather than fences at the top.

Ray Wyre is author of *Women, Men and Rape* (Perry Publications, 1986). The Gracewell Institute, where he works, is in Birmingham, UK.

GULF WAR

One year on

Palestinians hounded in Kuwait

A YEAR has passed since the Gulf war consumed our attention. Now it seems diminished and remote. Yet millions continue to suffer the war's consequences. The prospect that they will obtain relief has diminished along with the passing of the spotlight of world attention.

JORDAN/NETWORK

Liberated Kuwait has no place for Palestinians or democracy.

Palestinians living in Kuwait prior to the Iraqi invasion are among the continuing victims. After the liberation there was a flurry of attention to some of the more flagrant Kuwaiti abuses against Palestinians and others accused – generally on the basis of little or no evidence – of collaborating with Iraqis or merely sympathizing with them. But when the Kuwaiti government commuted the death sentences imposed upon some accused of collaboration, interest in Kuwaiti justice abated.

According to Middle East Watch there have been what would be called 'death squad' killings if they had taken place in Central America, disappearances, clandestine burials, torture, rape in detention, prolonged incommunicado detention, horrifying conditions of imprisonment and farcical trials. Of about 5,800 persons detained since liberation, at least 3,000 remain in detention today. A much larger number of Palestinians and others who resided in Kuwait have been expelled or barred from returning to the country. About 180,000 Palestinians fled during the Iraqi occupation and have not been permitted to return.

Having whipped up support for the war by recounting horror stories about Iraqi atrocities against Kuwaitis – some of them real, others imaginary – the Bush Administration hardly distinguishes itself by ignoring abuses by the Kuwaitis. At a press conference on July 1 last year President Bush said: 'The war wasn't fought about democracy in Kuwait. The war was fought about aggression against Kuwait.' ■

Aryeh Neier / The Nation

Coffee dregs

By mid-August 1991, the world price of coffee had fallen to $900 a ton, little more than its price in July 1975 and well below the cost of production for most of the 50-

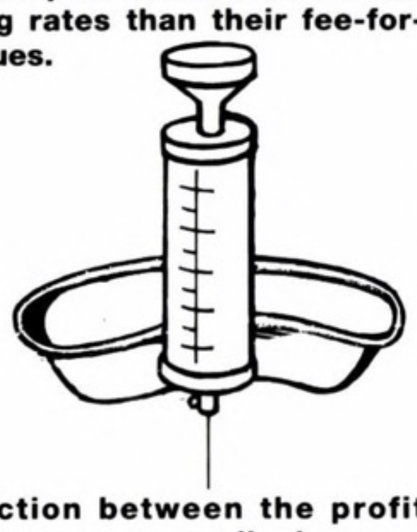
plus coffee-growing countries. The $15 billion a year world coffee market is dogged by oversupply. World-wide coffee production in 1989/90 was around 93 million 63-kilo bags, but only 83 million bags were bought.

Attempts are being made to resuscitate the International Coffee Agreement which, until it collapsed in 1989, supported prices by regulating the supply of coffee beans coming onto the world market. The agreement collapsed partly because Brazil, which had a quota under the ICA amounting to 30 per cent of world trade, would not agree to a quota reduction enabling other coffee-growing countries to increase their much smaller quotas. The subsequent free-for-all saw countries dumping on the international markets all their stock which had previously built up.

International Agricultural Development Vol 11 No 5 1991

Private health costs

Surgeons in the US are usually paid on a fee-for-service or piece-rate basis. This is the land of private health care. Statistics show that people there are twice as likely to have an operation as people in Britain, where there is still a National Health System and surgeons are paid simply a salary for doing their NHS work. American surgeons who are paid salaries have much lower operating rates than their fee-for-service colleagues.



The connection between the profit motive and unnecessary medical operations continues within the UK. Data shows that British women in the private beds in NHS hospitals have more than twice as many caesarean births as those in the non-paying beds. It could be that doctors have the financial incentive to operate. It could also be because some patients with private health insurance can claim for a caesarean but not a normal delivery.

Which? Way to Health, June 1991

WORK

Workaholics

Spare time blues hit middle-aged men

THE Centre for the Shortening of Working Hours in Japan is struggling to change the habits of a nation of compulsive workaholics. But a campaign for shorter working hours and a five-day week seems doomed to fail. Workers need the money – and a national guilt complex is felt by all those daring enough simply to clock in and out.

The average working year in Japan is 2,044 hours compared with 1,600 hours in Germany and 1,900 in the UK and US. Average monthly overtime is 28.8 hours, rising to as much as 50 hours. Yet a recent survey by the Trade Union Confederation revealed that only 24 per cent of Japanese workers would prefer shorter hours.

The reluctance to take time off work is particularly pronounced among older managers whose careers coincide with the period of high-growth post-war economic boom. These are the workers who believe that time spent at work is what matters, not actual results. Toyota Motors have introduced a policy designed to make managers take 10 consecutive days off per year. The move is seen as being partly a response to the *Karoshi*, or sudden death from overwork, of vice-chairman Tsutomu Oshimo.

Even if employees are cajoled into taking holidays, many are at a loss to know what to do with themselves. The National Recreation Association tries to help middle-aged men to 'discard their sense of guilt at having spare time and enjoying themselves', according to spokesperson Akira Asano. Some still suffer from the trauma of only working five and a half days a week – the 'weekend depressives' who phone the National Institute for Mental Health for guidance.

A recent article in a Tokyo newspaper claimed, under the headline 'Unattractive Men Cause Declining Population in Japan', that marriage is no longer appealing to Japanese women because of the drone-like prospective spouses on offer. Keiko Higuchi, a professor of women's studies at Tokyo Kasei University, believes that 'unless people put their private lives before corporate ones, their whole life will yield nothing'. ■

Philip Short / Gemini

TELEVISION

Prime time

Latin American 'soaps' strike back

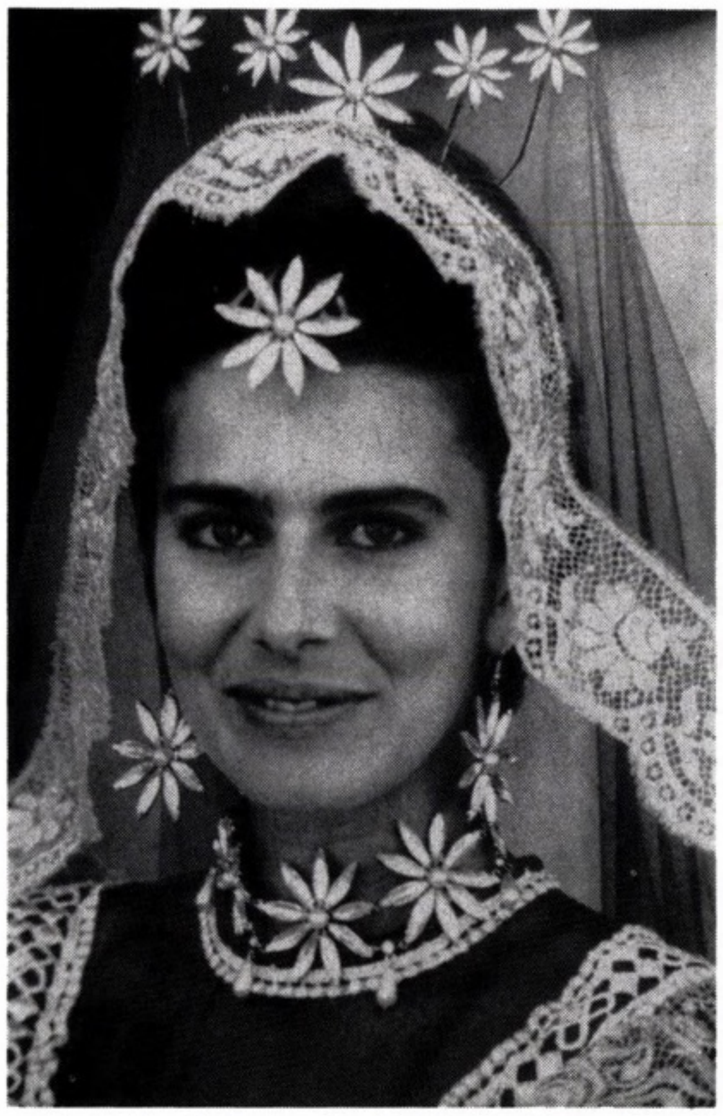
FLOODED with slick TV programming from the US and Europe, developing countries often feel overwhelmed by foreign cultural products. But producers of Latin American soap operas, known as *telenovelas*, are launching a remarkably successful counter-attack, seducing audiences and penetrating tough markets with their steamy exports. Audiences at home love them too.

Like their 'soap opera' counterparts in the US and Europe, *telenovelas* provide an irresistible blend of sex, drama and strong emotions to attract their growing international following. While hardly culture, they do possess special attributes that explain their ability to compete. In recent years Brazil's TV Globo has been selling 40-minute episodes to Italy for $3,000 to $6,000, whereas half an hour of US programming can cost as much as $48,000.

Latin American TV companies have also succeeded in broadening the middle-class target audience aimed at by the original 'soap operas'. *Telenovelas* reach all classes, including the urban poor, men as well as women. Interest in working-class and lower-middle-class characters contrasts sharply with the North American obsession with the lifestyles and values – or lack of them – of the rich.

Plots, characters, settings and themes are fine-tuned to attract the largest audience. Testing is continuous, sometimes daily and door to door. 'The *novela* is like life,' says Gustavo Basalo Sucre, programming director of Radio Caracas TV. 'You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. Even the actors are surprised.' A popular character's role may be expanded, an unpopular one's changed or reduced, and so on according to the survey results.

Amazing coincidence rules in Venezuelan *Paraíso* (Paradise) ...



... but the heroine *Doña Beija*, from Brazil remains predictably pure.

It's an idealized daily life, for sure, where amazing coincidence is almost routine and justice always triumphs. When military dictatorships reigned in much of Latin America, scripts emphasizing political freedom and resistance against oppression were not let into Argentina, Chile and other military-dominated countries.

Even today Brazilian scripts must be submitted to the censors, who have frequently demanded the excision of entire chapters or scenes deemed politically offensive – nudity, however, does not seem to bother them. The tradition of *machismo* demands that heroines, though not heroes, must always be pure and virginal. 'Serious' treatment of urban poverty, on the other hand, generally offends against the constraints of the international market.

Telenovelas now dominate prime time in the huge Spanish-speaking US market. The next step is to gain a larger share of the English-language audience. And that's coming. Soon the Venezuelan production *Topacio* will be seen on Fox Television – the first *novela* dubbed into English for the US market. ■

Geoffrey Fox / Development Forum

Excavating the tip

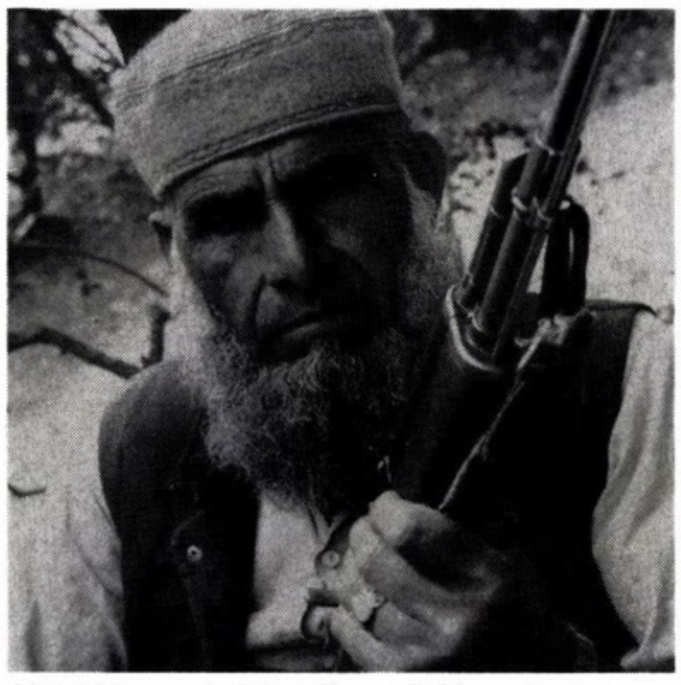
Excavating landfill tips is the speciality of Bill Rathje, archaeologist from the University of Arizona. He is bound for Toronto to dig up three landfills there. The research is about the city's curbside recycling scheme which has been running for several years. The aim is to see how much of the rubbish conscientiously recycled by Toronto's good citizens still ends up on the same tip as everything else.

Surprises from Bill Rathje's research so far include the small proportion of rubbish which is non-biodegradable plastics. They account for less than 5 per cent of the weight and 12 per cent of the volume. The biggest element in North American landfills is paper, particularly telephone directories. It takes up about half the total space of the trash.

Worse still is the lack of biodegrading – rotting – which occurs. The landfills are too well-sealed and too dry. Scarcely 25 per cent of what is tipped, rots. And the rotting almost stops after 15 years. Mr Rathje's excavations have found a head of lettuce from 1982 which looked better than many do in the fridge after a week. Furthermore, biodegradable paper often maintains its pristine condition. Rathje has found newspapers dating back to 1952 looking like they were hot off the press.

Saudis arm Afghans with Gulf war castoffs

A recent US-Soviet agreement to halt arms supplies to their respective allies in Afghanistan was threatening to bring everyone to the negotiating table. Now however, Saudi Arabia is sending more weapons to the Islamic fundamentalist groups of the *mujahideen*. Since the end of the Gulf War these Afghan guerrillas have



SVEN SIMON/CAMERA PRESS

Mujahideen rebel: hardliners fight moderates.

been receiving captured Iraqi weapons including 300 T62 tanks, anti-aircraft guns, and 120 and 130 mm artillery. With the current stockpiles fighting could last another three or four years.

It is all confusing for the moderate *mujahideen* factions, who can spend as much time fighting the hardline factions as they do the Kabul government forces. For whilst the moderates had supported the Coalition Forces during the Gulf War, those same hardline factions had supported Saddam Hussein.

Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 154 No 40

RAINFORESTS

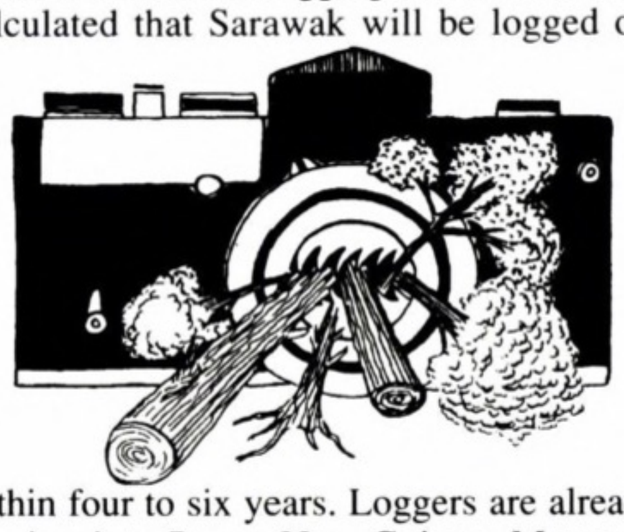
Tarnished hi-tech

Japanese household names linked to logging

JAPANESE mod cons may have swept the world, but Japan's companies are also market leaders in the headlong rush to log the rainforests – particularly in South-East Asia.

Fortunately for would-be boycotters each one of the major Japanese logging companies is inextricably bound through the *Zaibastu* corporate structure to well-known brand names. Sharp, NEC, Pentax, Toshiba and Nikon all figure largely as associates of the companies whose activities make Japan the world's largest importer of rainforest timber.

Having virtually exhausted supplies in the Philippines and some of the Indonesian islands, the loggers are now focussing on the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, on Borneo. At current logging rates, it has been calculated that Sarawak will be logged out



within four to six years. Loggers are already moving into Papua New Guinea, Myanmar and the Solomon Islands.

As the largest trading house in Japan, if not the largest logger, Mitsubishi has been chosen as the main target for protests. Friends of the Earth Holland have been

Forests fall to Japan, the world's largest importer of rainforest timber.

demonstrating outside Mitsubishi Motors, and in several countries campaigners are trying to set up telephone and fax blockades of Mitsubishi offices.

Campaign supporters are asking people to write to associated companies telling them politely why they feel the enjoyment of purchasing their products is tarnished by the logging activities of their associates. ■

Rob Harrison / Ethical Consumer and The Globe

Send letters of complaint to:
Mitsubishi Corp, 2-6-3 Maunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Mitsubishi Motors, 4-21-1 Shimo Maruko, Ota-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Mitsubishi Electric, 2-2-3 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Nikon Corp, 3-2-3 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan
AKAI Electric, PO Box 21, Tokyo International Airport, Tokyo, Japan

The mod-con log league

Zaibatsu (holding Co.)	Logs Traded (000m³)	Logging Company	Cameras	Hifi	Cars
Sanwa	1,528	Nissho Iwai	Yashica	Sharp	–
Sumitom	1,134	Sumito	–	NEC	–
Ichi-Kan	1,039	C.Itoh	Pentax	Fujitsu	Isuzu
Fuyo	1,030	Marubeni	Canon	–	Nissan
Mitsui	474	Mitsui & Co.	–	Toshiba	Toyota
Mitsubishi	467	Mitsubishi	Nikon	Akai	Mitsubishi

SOURCE: HADFIELD & KURODA South East Asia 1987.

Out of site

One of the less impressive aspects of the flimflam that surrounded last October's World Bank/IMF meeting in Bangkok was the Thai army engineers. They forcibly cleared a slum along a railway track to build a new road providing back door access to the conference venue. No resettlement site was provided for those evicted, and local journalists were warned not to report on the evictions. Interestingly enough, during the conference almost no vehicles used the road and most of the time barbed wire blocked the rear entrance to the conference hall.

Far Eastern Economic Review Vol 154 No 43 1991

END

END Quote Quote

'Indians discovered the colonial pirate Christopher Columbus who was hopelessly lost on the high seas. For that we continue to suffer 500 years of deceit and treachery from these colonial intruders who have invaded our sacred lands. In retrospect, we, the Indian people, would be better off had we taken Columbus and his ragtag crew by the seats of their ragged trousers and thrown them back into the sea.'

Wabun-Inini aka Vernon Bellecourt, Anishinabeg Nation, North America.

'You needn't kill everyone to complete the job ... We instituted Civil Affairs in 1982 which provides development for 70 per cent of the population, while we kill 30 per cent.'

Former Guatemalan Defence Minister, General Hector Alejandro Gramajo, quoted in Harvard International Review, Spring 1991

Window on a whirlwind: Mexican massacre in Fons' *Red Sunrise*.

films

Toronto's latest Festival of Festivals again provided a valuable and rare showcase for those interested in the explosion of Third World film. Here are three of the highlights.

Red Sunrise

directed by **Jorge Fons**

One of the most emotionally charged offerings at the Festival, **Red Sunrise** deals with the massacre of hundreds of students at the time of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. All the action takes place in one family in one apartment overlooking the killing ground of the Three Culture Plaza – an early parallel to Tiananmen Square. The suspense builds throughout the film: two of the family's sons are involved in the student movement and a web of repression closes around everyone.

The film has a claustrophobic feel – it could have made a stage play as easily as a movie – and is for neither the fainthearted nor those who like their cinema lush and full of virtuoso big names. But the acting is sound and the plot carries the viewer along to some startling insights into what makes present-day Mexico tick. The fact that the film was blocked from release in Mexico for two years is blunt testimony to its effectiveness in laying bare one of those episodes that the powers-that-be would rather keep buried.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Te Rua

directed by **Barry Barclay**

Maori director Barclay's first film *Ngata* was widely praised internationally. His follow-up is structured as a thriller in which performance poet Peter Huaka and his lawyer uncle Rewi Marqangai devise separate undercover operations aimed at repatriating three sacred Maori carvings from a Berlin museum.

The main narrative thus grapples with the global controversy of aboriginal artifacts being caged in the institutions of another culture. This is interwoven with subplots involving romance and family tensions, whose honesty and humour about the strains between generations and between cultures strike a universal chord.

But the great strength of the film is that even its plotline reflects the particular Maori perspective on the world: it is at the request of the old grandmother Nanny Matai that the carvings have to be reclaimed, yet the way this happens is, to say the least, unconventional. Barclay is a talent to watch.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

Diplomatic Immunity

directed by **Sturla Gunnerson**

This movie has an unlikely heroine: a bureaucrat from that hardy band of do-gooders the Canadian International Development Agency. She is assigned the job of preparing a ministerial visit to El Salvador and is shocked by what she finds: by the violence, the poverty and by what is being done with Canada's aid dollars.

In order to make the Minister's visit a success she tries to work out the transfer of needy refugees to a Canadian-built housing compound that has been hijacked by the Salvadorean military. In the process she gets caught up in the heat and dirt of the conflicts that are rending apart Salvadorean society. She alienates the peasants and angers both the military and their US paymasters.

Diplomatic Immunity is an exaggerated version of real events and while parts of the story and some of the characters

Shocked diplomat in El Salvador.

are thin, there is enough credibility and drama to carry the story. It provides a powerful challenge to official Canada's wilful innocence about US motives and methods in the Third World and how this undermines Canada's cherished ambition to be a 'helpful fixer' for those in need.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

books

When Humans Roamed the Earth

by **Chris Madden** (*WWF/Earthscan*)

Cartoon books that can sustain their level of invention and wit over a hundred pages (as opposed to the single-frame burst) are actually few and far between. Usually you weary of the style or the voice. Too often there is also no sense of a positive ethos underlying the satire.

Chris Madden's book supplies so clear and consistent a positive Green ethos that you would think he'd be in grave danger of becoming tedious by harping on the same theme. There are certainly elements of repetition here: the lead-free fuelled car/tanker smashing the hapless hedgehog/cyclist; the recurring dinosaurs and dodos, trees of life and hapless green consumers.

But more often that not the development of a particular idea from a number of different angles (including, most unusually, the view of the insect or animal) gives the book more depth and consistency. So you not only have the insecticide which kills ugly insects but spares ladybirds and butterflies; you also have the fly selling pseudo-butterfly wings as a sure-fire way to 'cheat the human death sprays'.

Madden's intelligent insects are particularly affecting. As the World Wide Fund for Nature (the book's co-publishers) well know, it is easy to care about cuddly-looking pandas or magnificent tigers but less easy to be bothered about bugs. Yet here it is the stag beetle who signs a treaty on human-animal co-operation ('the humans later reneged'); the woodlice who manoeuvre their robot into the position of managing director of Pesto-Kill and have him announce 'We're moving out of pesticides and starting a big

programme of laying damp stones on the ground'.

In fact the book should perhaps carry a warning to consumers: 'read this and your capacity to kill flies and other irritants may be severely impaired'.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

music

Flash of the Spirit

by **Jon Hassell/Farafina** (Intuition)

Farafina are a group from Burkina Faso whose use of atonal percussion with traditional *balafon* (marimba-like tuned gourd instrument) makes for a hypnotically dense sound, curiously close to Balinese *gamelan*. Composer and trumpeter Hassell has, over the years, adopted a particularly intellectual approach to the fusing of world sounds, one predicated largely on taking musics out of their cultural contexts. If his music occasionally suggests a slightly arid idea of sound as art installation, nevertheless it has extended the palette and the transcultural awareness of the electronic avant-garde.

In **Flash of the Spirit**, recorded in 1989, Hassell's sparse instrumentation – keyboards and eerie blasts of treated trumpet – builds on Farafina's original compositions, not using them as backing for solos but adding terse, impressionistic colouring. Mixing and editing by Daniel Lanois and Brian Eno then add a further distance to what already sounds strangely aloof and ghostly.

The result is consistently fascinating, often quite scary, the nearest equivalent perhaps being Miles Davis' all-but-inscrutable electronic work of the early 1970s. But there is an artificiality here which rather refutes the stereotype of 'naturalness' that often attaches to African music.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Chris Brazier**

THE *classic*

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

... being the film that broke the class mould of British cinema

SATURDAY Night and Sunday Morning (1960) begins amid the deafening roar of a Nottingham engineering factory. In it we see Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney), a surly young man working away at his lathe. Arthur's attitude to life is summed up by his opening voice-over, spoken over the clatter and repetitive routine of his job: 'Don't let the bastards grind you down!'

In the story that follows, we see this insolent rebel bluster his way through some of the formative experiences of his young adulthood. He drinks a lot of beer and continually speaks his mind about the society he's been born into: a world where people marry young, get dead-end jobs and 'before they know where they are, they've kicked the bucket!' He has a scathing attitude to these people for passively giving in to the 'gaffers' who make sure everyone stays in their place. 'They rob you left, right and centre and then after they've skinned you dry, you get called up in the army and get shot to death!'

Arthur meets a young woman, Doreen, in the pub and talks her into a date. But he's also having an affair with Brenda, the wife of one of his workmates, and his two-timing love life moves into crisis when Brenda tells him that she's pregnant. By the end of the film he seems to be drifting into marriage with Doreen. It's a trap perhaps, but as he looks down on the bland new housing development he'll probably be living in, he can't resist throwing a stone as a last gesture of defiance.

Scripted by Alan Sillitoe from his own novel, **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning** was a landmark film in all kinds of ways. Following on from the much more restrained *Room at the Top* (1958), it sounded the death knell for several decades of British films extolling cosy middle-class values in which everyone cheerfully knew their place. In British cinema until the late 1950s (apart from a brief wave of egalitarianism during World War Two), working-class characters performed much the same function as black characters in Hollywood movies. They were types, thick-accented comic relief to the main drama which typically involved such quintessential middle-class actors as John Mills and Jack Hawkins. In movies such as *Brief Encounter* (1945), the working-class characters had only a painfully limited emotional range compared with that of their well-spoken 'betters'.

Screen newcomer Finney's bravura performance broke that mould decisively with a loud and very sour note of dissent. Here was a working-class character with no trace of deference, a brazen individual who believed in nothing but himself – 'all the rest is propaganda!' He is an authentic but not a progressive figure. His attitude to women is appalling. But, Finney's Arthur Seaton is still the only character in British Cinema to rank with the likes of Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* (1953) as a celluloid rebel.

Even though the movie is populated entirely by working-class characters, the British class system is delineated here with an accurate verbal savagery which no film before or since has equalled. The maintenance of the class system was, and is, the most important organizing principle of injustice in British society. The film very powerfully presents this as a trap and, similarly, work and marriage are seen as constraints holding the individual in a grip of conformity. Seaton sees the world through jaundiced eyes but, his sexism aside, it's a persuasive viewpoint. His description of his parents is still as good a summary as you'll get of a country where tabloid newspapers and TV game shows are staples in far too many people's lives: 'They've got a television set and a packet of fags but they're both dead from the neck up... They've had their hash settled for them, so that all the bloody gaffers can push them around like a lot of sheep!'

The world of **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning** is one I recognized immediately when I first saw the film as a teenager. I grew up in a colliery village in the North-East and went to the local school. Of the 180 plus children in my first year at that school, only three of us went on to university seven years later. Almost all of my friends left school at 16, got blue-collar jobs and were married with children by their twenty-first birthdays. That's still standard procedure in the area, except that these days unemployment often substitutes for work. The reality of that kind of severely circumscribed upbringing is reflected in pitifully few British films and yet it remains the norm for many and perhaps most people.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning was arguably the first British film to give an uncondescending representation of working-class life and it was certainly the first to celebrate convincingly a working-class hero. For all his faults and vulgar bluster, I liked Arthur Seaton a lot when I first saw him – and I still like him a lot now. ■

Tom Tunney

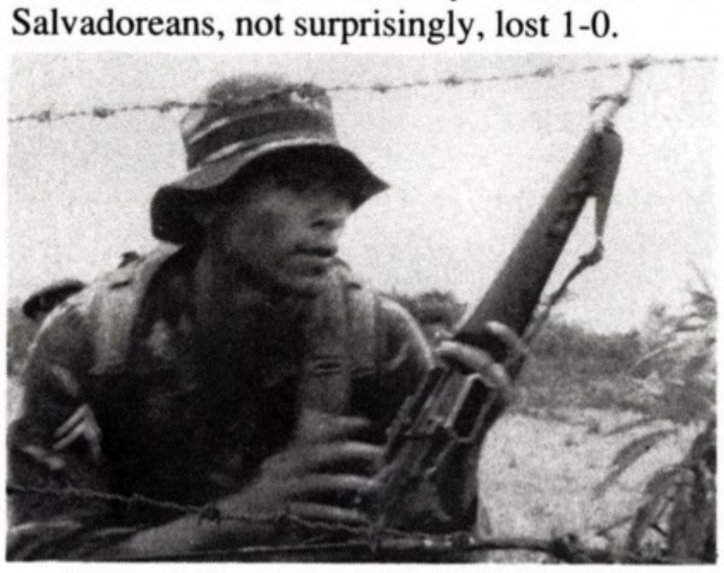
Saturday Night and Sunday Morning *written by Alan Sillitoe and directed by Karel Reisz.*

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'curiosities'.

Does anyone know what the 'Football War' was about?

● Exactly what it implies – it was a war that started over a game of football. It happened in 1969 when Honduras and El Salvador were playing each other in the qualifying rounds for the 1970 World Cup. The first match was played on Sunday June 8 in the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa. The night before the match Honduran fans surrounded the hotel in which the Salvadorean team was staying and throughout the night threw stones at windows, beat sheets of metal and empty barrels, leaned on horns of cars parked outside the hotel and set off strings of firecrackers. The next day the exhausted Salvadoreans, not surprisingly, lost 1-0.



PIERS CAVENDISH/CAMERA PRESS

Meanwhile, back in San Salvador 18-year-old Amelia Bolanios watched her national team lose on TV – took out her father's pistol and promptly shot herself. Amelia was given a state funeral, the President of the Republic, his ministers, and the football team following her flag-draped coffin. On the return match it was the Honduran team's turn to spend a sleepless night – and to lose 3-0. Honduran fans were kicked and beaten (two of them died), 150 visitors' cars were burned and the border between the two countries was closed.

The next day a Salvadorean plane bombed Tegucigalpa and troops launched a ground assault. Honduras retaliated by dropping bombs on El Salvador. By the time the Soccer War was over 100 hours later, 6,000 people had been killed and 12,000 wounded.

The deciding game was finally held on neutral ground in Mexico, the fans kept apart at opposite ends of the stadium by 5,000 Mexican police armed with clubs. El Salvador won 3-2. All this and more can be found in Ryszard Kapuscinski's fascinating reportage/auto-biography *The Soccer War* (Granta, 1990).

Jane Bertram, Cambridge, UK

Can someone please explain the difference between GNP and GDP?

● The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the measure of a country's output from all domestic producers. The Gross National Product (GNP) is the GDP *plus* the earnings from that country's ownership of assets abroad such as property, factories and plantations – and *minus* the earnings that foreigners receive from their ownership of such assets in the host country.

Roger Britton, Farnham, UK

Where is Idi Amin now?

● Alive and well and living in Saudi Arabia. What does he do all day?

Peter Davis, Oxford, UK

Why was Haile Selassie called the 'Lion of Judah'?

● In the reply in **NI 223** the belief that Menelik, the first ruler of Axum in northern Ethiopia, was the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba was dismissed as 'myth' and 'legend'. I am undertaking post-doctoral research on the 'Menelik text' – one section of the Ge'ez epic *Kebra Nagast* – and I can assure you I am not alone in concluding that the linguistic evidence, geographical references and other data, indicate that the Menelik story is more than a legend.

It also provides valuable information concerning southern Arabian history. Hopefully the Rastafarians' belief will eventually become part of mainstream Biblical studies.

Dr Bernard Leeman, Westbrook, Australia

I understand that there is an African tree that explodes. Does anyone know which – and why?

● I've seen these in Malawi and they are called Baobab trees. The tree is enormous and has a soft inside which is very gaseous. When the gases build up the tree can burst into flames – or so I was told!

Sue Seymour, Bridlington, UK

QUESTIONS awaiting your answers:

How does a fly land on a ceiling? How does a fly take off from a ceiling? MT Gibbs, Kempston, UK

I've heard it said that Ludwig van Beethoven was black. Is there any truth in this? Esther Ferguson, London, UK

Why do nomads in the Sahara wear dark colours when light colours are supposed to be cooler? Alan Davidson, Tipton, UK

Where do Panama hats originate from? Janet Merton, Dublin, Eire

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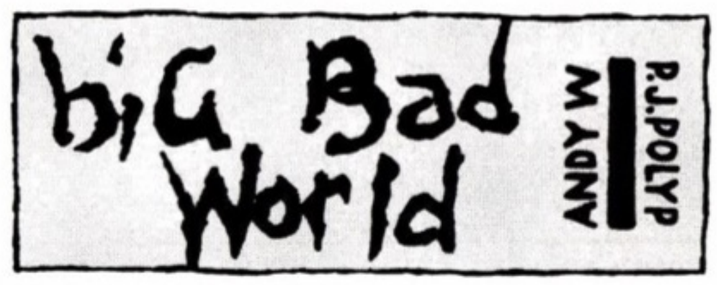
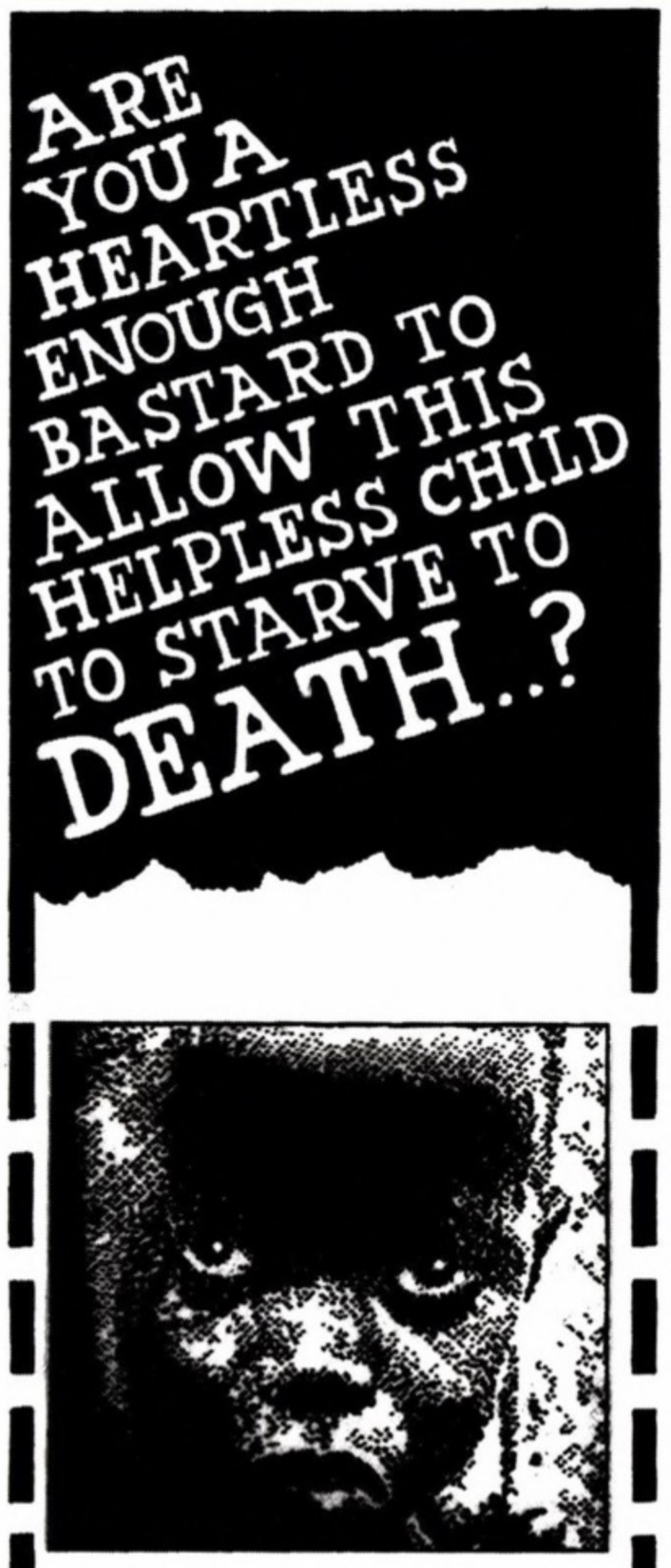
If you have any questions please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK**, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).





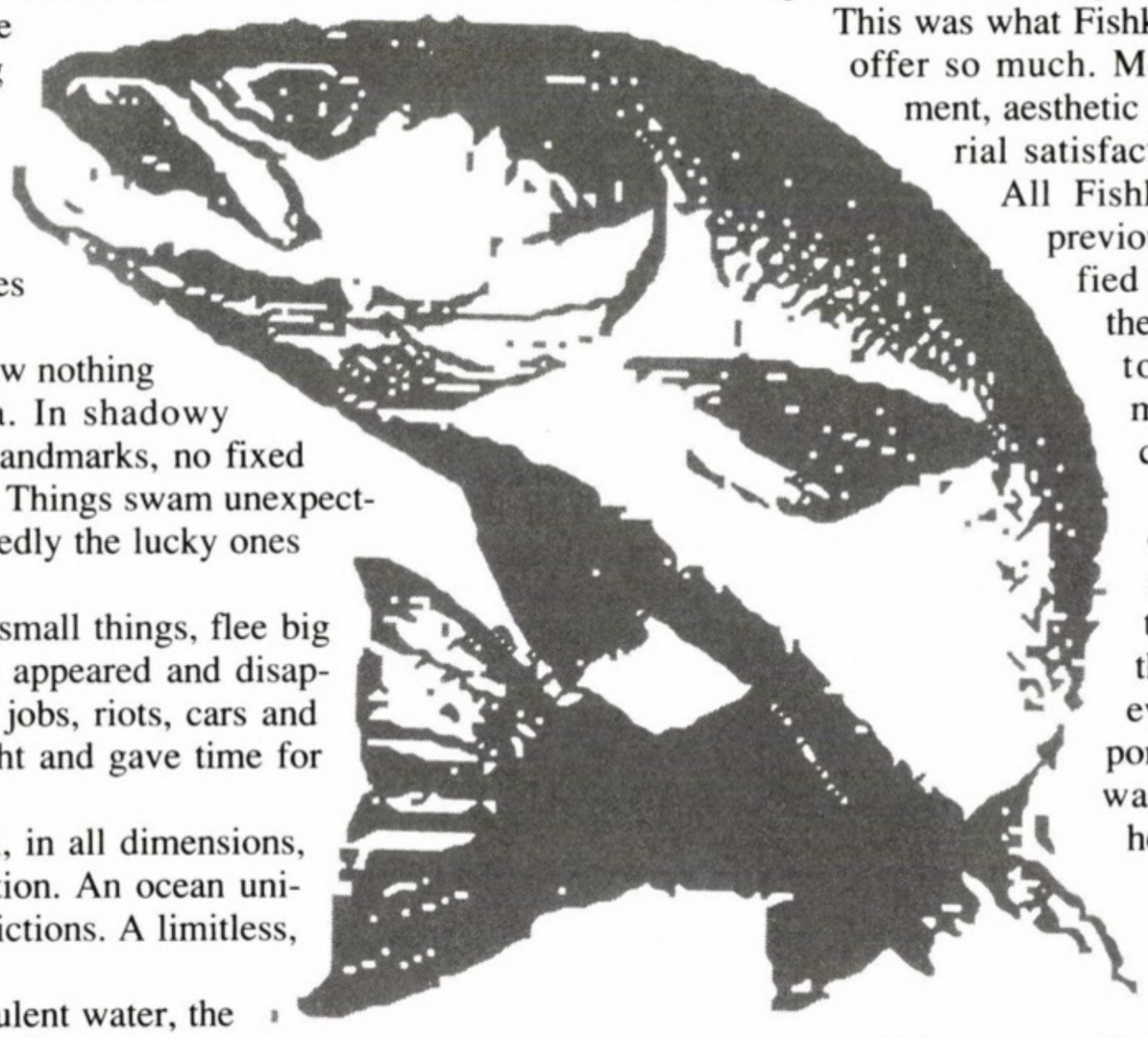
The dreams of Fishkind

Desire and ambition.
A fish-eyed view from ***Kit Garbett****.*

HE was very smart, for a fish. Not as smart as the dolphin, or even the octopus. He certainly couldn't construct cities where fish work, or towns where fish sleep, or cars for fish to rush between towns and cities, or mortgages, or riots, or jobs. Not that smart; but for a fish he was smart.

He lived in the middle of the ocean, mid-way between the surface and the floor, a middle-of-the-road fish. If the fictitious pollsters were to ask his politics he would say centre right … with left leanings, very much a wet. A floating voter.

He saw neither surface nor ocean bed. Philosophically he sometimes wondered if there was an ocean surface; if so what lay beyond that surface? Then the terror of infinity gripped him, and he would think about something else, fearing for his sanity. The surface hovered on the border of existence, a speculation, not even a concept. The sun, the sky, the clouds, and whatever lies beyond, did not exist at all.



He had never seen land. He saw nothing that was not sea, or of the sea. In shadowy depths, in the sea, there are no landmarks, no fixed points, no left, right, up or down. Things swam unexpectedly into view. Equally unexpectedly the lucky ones swam out.

There was a simple rule. Eat small things, flee big things. It made life easy. Things appeared and disappeared. Eat or flee. No need for jobs, riots, cars and estate agents. It took little thought and gave time for philosophy.

It also gave freedom to travel, in all dimensions, as far as he wished in any direction. An ocean universe with no boundaries or restrictions. A limitless, yet limited world.

He knew spawning time, turbulent water, the earth's magnetic field, the electrical impulses of living creatures and the true Being of fishness. He knew this, without qualifications, computers, paper, writers or publishers. He was a very smart fish.

Then something different entered his world. It stretched across his world. It stayed there. This had never happened before. He pondered this. Because it was still there, he wondered if it had always been there, or always would be there. A dim glimmering of time entered his fishy mind.

He swam away until it was out of sight. He turned a half circle without navigation aids, charts, plans, committee decisions, or prior approval – and swam back. The thing reappeared. He tried this repeatedly, in different directions. Each time the thing reappeared.

He grew excited. If it was always there he could calculate how long it took to swim away and back to it. This could be useful. He could work at this 'how long things took'; it held promise for him and for Fishkind.

He could swim away from and back to it, given the right direction. This he thought was getting somewhere. He had a direction in life. Somewhere to go to and from and he could tell how long he had been away. He paused to digest this and gobbled a shrimp, which also needed digesting.

The thing gave him much to think about and had opened up so much of life. Could there be more of it? That was a revelation, that there could be more than swimming aimlessly and philosophizing.

He followed the thing down. It was a line he had to follow.

It stopped. It was finite. Where it stopped it changed form. There was something hard, and shiny, that caught the faint light. The thing gleamed in the darkness. Now it held wonder. It had opened his mind to new horizons and it reflected the light, giving illumination. This thing (he would name it later) held great potential.

On the hard shiny part there was a worm. A tasty-looking worm. Such a worm that a fish met only once. A worm that no fish could ignore. The most magnificent of all the thing's gifts.

This was what Fishkind wanted. This thing could offer so much. Mental stimulation, entertainment, aesthetic pleasure, and above all material satisfaction and free worms for all. All Fishkind's dreams which hadn't previously existed – could be satisfied if it possessed the secret of the thing. And the thing was his to take. Only seize the moment, and grasp what had come into his life.

Strong, smart, fish lips closed around the worm. In seizing his Grail, he was transported. The power of the thing uplifted. Power such that even when he let go it still supported him. He rose through the water, rose till he thought his heart would burst.

He broke through. His watery world fell away. He was bathed in dazzling light. Light so intense that his eyes could scarcely stand it. He gasped in awe at the light. The light revealed many colours, splendid unimaginable colours. He gasped in amazement at the colours. Below him stretched the ocean, above him stretched the blue of a greater ocean. Instantly he realized the smallness of his world. He gasped in wonder at the immensity of the world.

Breathless he swung 'twixt Earth and Heaven and gasped at the revelation.

He gasped again.

Then he gasped no more.

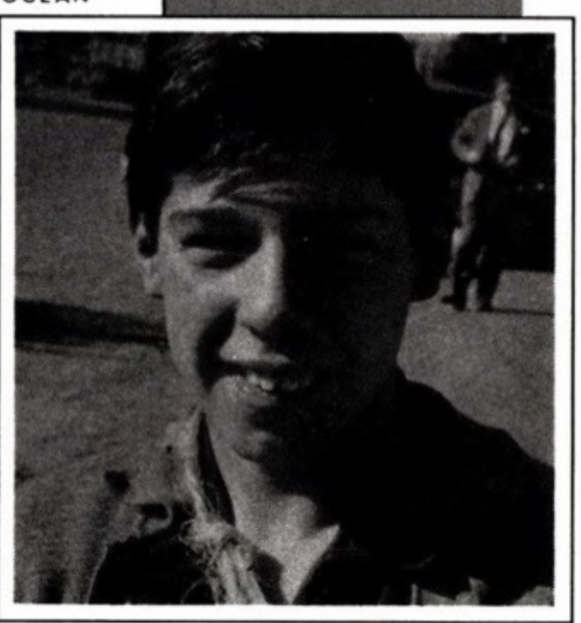
The fisher was pleasured with his catch. He had enough fish to feed his family. Now he took more to sell at the market. With money maybe he could someday buy a television, or car, or one of the other bright shiny things that the Western tourists had.

These things could offer so much. Mental stimulation, entertainment, aesthetic pleasure and, above all, material satisfaction. All his dreams could be satisfied if he only could possess these things. And the things could be his to take. Only seize the moment, and grasp what had come into his life.

The hook was baited again. ■

Kit Garbett is a short story writer who lives in the north of England.

Argentina



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ARGENTINIANS jokingly describe themselves as 'Spaniards who talk like Italians and pretend to be British'. In addition to large Spanish and Italian communities, Argentina hosts the second largest Jewish community in the western hemisphere, the largest British settlement outside the Commonwealth, and many Arabs (of Syrian and Lebanese origin), Germans, Poles, French, and Yugoslavians.

Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, is a sophisticated cosmopolitan city. Imprints of immigrants, mixed with local tradition, can be seen in the city's architectural style, which resembles that of Paris, Madrid or New York. Spirited *porteños* (as local residents are called) will encourage you to taste the famous beef *parrillada* (grills) and Mendoza province wines, or enjoy the prolific cultural activities – concerts, Tango shows, theatre, and opera.

As diverse as its population is Argentina's geography: the Andes mountains in the west fold away to the cattle and farming *Pampas* (plains) in the heart of the country. In the south, sub-antarctic weather in Patagonia's desert sharply contrasts with the sub-tropical vegetation of the north-east. The animals reflect the variety: penguins in the south, condors and ostriches in the centre, jaguars and toucans in the north.

Politically Argentina is not an exception in Latin America. Following independence from Spain in 1816, most of that century passed in civil wars and military campaigns to control the Indian territories of the *Pampas*. Stability came in the 1880s with a centralized government and a flourishing economy based on grain and beef exports to Europe. By the turn of the century Argentina ranked among the 10 richest nations of the world. The political power and the wealth from the economic bonanza was in the hands of a national oligarchy of land and cattle owners who resorted to the army when confronted with social unrest.

The last military dictatorship (1976-83) culminated in severe violations of human rights. Its attempt to seize control of the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands in 1982 led to a bloody war between Argentina and Britain that ended with Argentine surrender. Civilian rule was restored in 1983 and the followers of Juan Perón, who governed the country from 1945 to 1955, regained the presidency in 1988.

President Menem, son of Syrian immigrants, faces the challenge of restoring economic stability and democratic consolidation. His government has gone in for tight policies to curb inflation and reduce the public sector deficit by selling state-owned corporations. Despite the high social cost of the austerity policy, the achievements in the economic field brought Menem's party a landslide victory in the 1991 Congressional elections.

But the questions linger. If the current path fails to deliver economic stability and democracy, will the military march back to power?

Alfredo Forti

AT A glance

Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Poor	★★
Appalling	★

POLITICS
Former populist, nationalist party applying a conservative economic model.
1982

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Free market and privatization have increased unemployment.
1982: ★★

LITERACY ★★★★★
95% One of the highest in the world.
1982: ★★★★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
Abundant natural resources and a highly educated labour force. Dependent on imported technology.
1982: ★★

FREEDOM ★★★★
Practically no political prisoners.
1982: ★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Better than in some other Latin American countries.
1982: ★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★
71 years *(US 76 years)*
Falling, due to public health cuts.
1982: ★★★★★

Leader President Carlos Saul Menem
Economy GNP per capita US $2,160 *(US $20,910)*
Main exports are wheat, corn/maize, oilseeds and wool. Main imports are machinery, equipment and chemicals. Argentina is the world's third largest producer of soya beans. Livestock and meat exports have fallen in the face of sharp competition from the EC, Uruguay and Brazil. Major industrial sectors are food production, textiles, transport and consumer goods.
People 31.9 million
Health Infant mortality 30 per 1,000 live births *(US 10 per 1,000)*
Culture Europeans make up 85 per cent of the population; Mestizos, Indians, Arabs and Jews the remainder.
Religion: Mainly Roman Catholic
Languages: Spanish (official), English, Italian, German, French.

Sources: *World Bank Report 1991; The Americas Review 1990.*

Last profiled in December 1982

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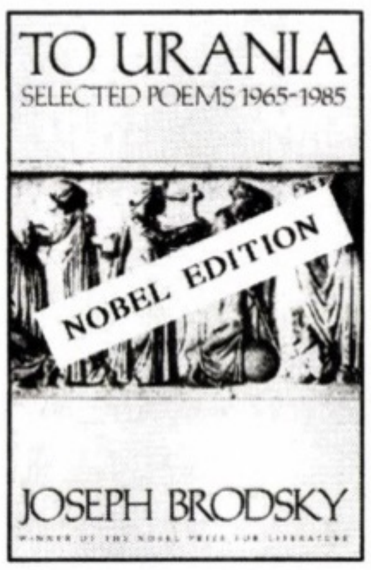

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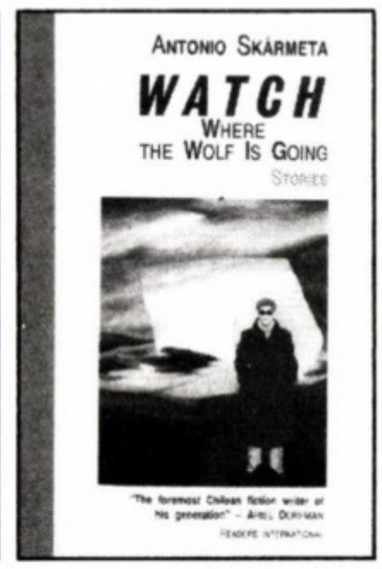

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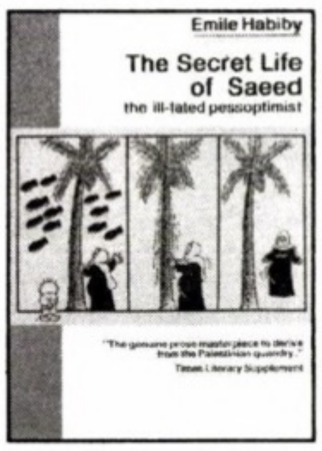
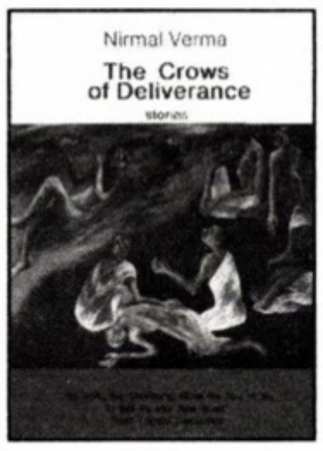
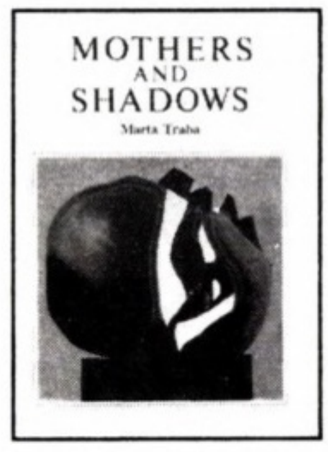


Saeed the Pessoptimist (062) by Emile Habiby, **Palestinian**
'Carnivalesque explosion of parody'
London Review of Books



The Crows of Deliverance (080) by Nirmal Verma* **India**
'Cosmopolitan with an Indian spin'
Kirkus Reviews



Mothers and Shadows (016) by Marta Traba, **Argentina**
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Sessions will be held at the Crowndale Centre, 216-220 Eversholt St, London NW1, every Wednesday between 29th January and 11th March 1992 at 6.15pm until 7.45pm. Each session costs £2 unwaged, £4 low waged, £6 waged.

For further details please contact, Robert Lancaster, LONDEC, 78 Eversholt Street, London NW1 Tel: 071 388 5809

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